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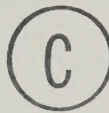






THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
RESPONSE TO SUBORDINATE GROUP STATUS: A CASE STUDY FROM  
THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

by



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the thesis was to study the response patterns made by a subordinate group to its assigned status. The study was based on the theoretical premise that the relationship between a dominant and subordinate group is primarily based on a power differential. A dominant group defines and monopolizes the higher statuses and more valued roles in a social system. To do so, this group uses its greater power to control and minimize the alternatives for action which the subordinate group may possess.

A subordinate group displays certain patterns of response to its position, the form of which depends upon its perception of the legitimacy of its assigned status. It may accept the role relationship as legitimate, or reject it, in which case it may adopt one of the patterns of avoidance, reform, or revolution. When such rejection assumes the form of a collective attempt on the part of the subordinate group to redefine the role relationship, it may become a social movement.

Men and women may be defined as interacting in a sex role relationship characterized by the dominance of men and the subordination of women. The usual response of women has been, and remains, that of acceptance of this relationship as legitimate. However, some women are coming to reject the legitimacy of the existing sex role relationship, and are attempting its redefinition. A manifestation of this rejection has been the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement.

This movement was examined as an example of the response made by a segment of a subordinate group population to its assigned status. The research took the form of a pilot inquiry, based on a participant observation study of the Women's Liberation organization in Edmonton, Alberta.





The emergence of ideology was examined as an indicator of the types of response to be found within the movement.

Four ideological variations, represented by four conflicting factions, were found to exist within the group studied. All the factions defined the problem situation facing women as that of oppression. This situation was defined as unacceptable, and the preferred alternative as that of self-determination. The variations rested on differing perceptions of the primary source of the problem situation, socialists defining it as capitalism, feminists identifying it as men. Tactics differed accordingly.

All four factions stated their goal as revolutionary. However, their responses were not invariably congruent with this stated goal. The Young Socialists exhibited a revolutionary response, both ideologically and behaviorally. The Socialist Women's Caucus espoused a revolutionary ideology, but their ideology was both internally inconsistent, and inconsistent with their behavior. The ideology and behavior of the feminists in the Rap Group were both consistent with the response of avoidance. The Silent Majority had no articulated ideology, but its behavior indicated a reformist response.

The findings that behavior and ideology were related by a degree of integration, as a distinct variable, had implications both for further refinement of the original theoretical schema, and for future research.





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## CHAPTER I

### A CONCEPTUAL SCHEMA: MODES OF RESPONSE TO SUBORDINATE GROUP STATUS

#### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Women's Liberation Movement has emerged as a collective response, on the part of a segment of the female population, to the position of women in our society. The researcher proposes an analysis of this social movement, based on a participant observation study of a Women's Liberation organization in a Canadian city. The study will focus on the nature of the movement as a response to perceived discrimination. The emergence of ideology will be examined as an indicator of the types of response to be found within the movement. The study will also consider the factors leading to the emergence and growth of the movement, as they influence the types of response expressed therein.

#### II. STATEMENT OF THE THEORY

The researcher proposes to provide a conceptual schema based on the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups in society. The schema will then be applied to a specific case of dominant/subordinate relations — the sex role relationship.

The relationship between a dominant and subordinate group is primarily based on a power differential. The greater power of the dominant group makes possible its control of the subordinate group, through which the latter may be relegated to a lower position in the status



hierarchy. In addition, the two groups are differentiated on the basis of symbolic cues. The characteristics of the subordinate group are socially defined as undesirable by the dominant group, and the label of inferiority provides the rationalization for discrimination which the power differential makes possible.

A subordinate group displays certain patterns of response to its position, the form of which depends upon its perception of the legitimacy of its assigned role. It may accept the role relationship as legitimate, or reject it, in which case it may adopt one of the patterns of avoidance, reform, or revolution. When such rejection assumes the form of a collective attempt on the part of the subordinate group to redefine the role relationship, it may become a social movement.

The type of response made by the movement members to the situation in which they perceive themselves, is likely to be embodied in an ideological statement. The ideology of a movement carries a declaration of rejection of the existing role relationship, analyses the causes for the existence of that relationship, defines and justifies the kind of role relationship which the movement is willing to accept as legitimate, and proposes tactics which, if used by the movement, will presumably implement the desired role relationship.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into sections devoted to an explication of the concepts outlined above.

### Dominant and Subordinate Groups

A "dominant group" and a "subordinate group" interact in a relationship of inequality, in which the dominant group maintains a position of high status and monopolizes those roles which are defined within the system as socially valuable. The ability of the dominant group to





appropriate these statuses and roles, and the rewards that go with them, is a function of its ability to control the life chances of the subordinate group.

...in the classic accommodative relationship of superordination/subordination — which can be exemplified on the group level by such relationships as nobility and vassals...and on the individual level by relationships of master/slave...it is expected that demands and directives flow in one direction and deference and compliance in the other.<sup>1</sup>

The basis of this relationship, and the key factor in creating and perpetuating it, is a power differential between the two groups. The result is a stratification system in which group membership is extremely rigid by virtue of status ascription and the absence of social mobility.

#### Power

The researcher has adopted, with some modifications, the definition of power as given by Abramson, Cutler, Kautz and Mendelson.<sup>2</sup> An actor, either as an individual or a collectivity acting as a unit, and holding an objective, has a range of possible lines of action from which he may select those most suitable for the realization of his objective.<sup>3</sup> Three types of lines of action are distinguished.<sup>4</sup> An open line is a suitable line for which the choice remains potential for a given actor. A closed line is an otherwise suitable line that is unavailable to actor A, but is open to other actors in pursuit of the same objective. A committed line is one that the actor is obligated to pursue by force of penalty if he does not. Lines of action are considered available to an actor only if recognized by him as such. "The number of...open lines of action available to each actor is the measure of the power of an actor."<sup>5</sup> According to Abramson et.al., "Power is potential for action; action is the expenditure of potential."<sup>6</sup>



Although highly useful, this definition of power has several limitations. When measuring the power of an actor, not only the number of alternative lines of action should be considered, but also the relative weight or efficiency of each line of action. For example, actor A may possess three alternative lines of action which he may utilize in order to reach his objective. He may perceive that each of these three lines of action has a low degree of efficiency in obtaining his objective. Actor B may possess only one line of action, but he may perceive that it is an extremely efficient one. In this case, the main determinant of power is not the number, but the relative efficiency of the lines of action which the actor perceives are open to him. Although the use of the phrase "lines of action...most suited to his objective"<sup>7</sup> suggests the criterion of efficiency, and although it was mentioned as a possible criterion in a footnote, Abramson et.al. confined the measurement of power almost completely to the number of lines of action available to the actor.

Second, when stating that action is the expenditure of power, Abramson et.al. do not carry their discussion one necessary extra step. While "...the action of achievement may incur a loss of power"<sup>8</sup>, and open lines may become committed or closed through action, this loss may in fact accrue further power to the actor. Power may beget power, in the sense that, by utilizing one or more of his available lines of action, an actor may open additional potential lines of action. Rather than merely committing what had been potential, he brings about a net increase in his power. Power must be considered in terms of a dynamic, continuing process, like a chess game in which immediate losses may contribute to a long-term winning strategy.





It is also necessary to consider power in the context of the relationship between the "moves" made by the actors involved in the pursuit of a common objective. "The measurement of social power is essentially meaningless unless it compares the power of two or more actors, i.e., interaction."<sup>9</sup> If power is expended through the utilization of one's lines of action, then by keeping these lines open and "potential", actor A should be able to keep his power intact. However, the actions of actor B may close off A's potential lines and diminish his power. Power cannot be considered only as a static "potential" involving one actor; it is primarily an interactional process engaging two or more actors.

Power, then, concerns the potential and/or actual use of lines of action by actors in the pursuit of an objective. The measure of an actor's power is the number of alternative lines of action possessed by the actor, which he perceives as available to him, and which he perceives as most efficient in obtaining his objective. The degree of power of each actor must be considered relative to the interaction of two or more actors in the context of common objectives.<sup>10</sup>

A dominant group holds greater power than a subordinate group in relation to a common objective, i.e. their role relationship. The degree to which it can control the subordinate group and thereby maintain its own position corresponds to the extent of this power differential.

### Symbolic Cues

In addition to power differentials, subordinate groups are secondarily distinguished on the basis of supplementary factors, symbolic cues which serve to differentiate them from the dominant group. To them are attributed certain physical and/or cultural characteristics which are socially defined as undesirable by the dominant segment of society. This



labelling serves two purposes. It makes a group "visible", so that the boundaries of group membership may be maintained easily. The presumed inferiority of a subordinate group provides a rationalization for differential treatment. Several techniques are used by the dominant group in order to preserve and enhance the symbolic differences between the two groups, including occupational and residence restrictions, forms of address, and endogamy.

For a further example, van den Berghe makes use of the concept of symbolic cues in his analysis of race and racism. A race is

...a human group that defines itself and/or is defined by other groups as different from other groups by virtue of innate and immutable physical characteristics. These physical characteristics are in turn believed to be intrinsically related to moral, intellectual, and other non-physical attributes or abilities.<sup>11</sup>

#### Prejudice and Discrimination

The existence of two groups, one of which is categorized as intrinsically inferior in attributes and power to the other, may give rise to prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior directed towards it by the more powerful group. These mechanisms provide both psychological and material rewards for the dominant group, at the expense of the subordinate group.

Negative prejudice, as an attitude or tendency to respond to certain cues in a negative manner, is based upon a faulty association of certain symbolic cues with others which are in reality not intrinsically related, and the inflexible generalization or imputation of these clusters of characteristics to groups or to individuals because they are defined as members of a group.<sup>12</sup> For example, van den Berghe discussed racism as a consequence of defining groups socially, but on the basis of physical criteria.





Racism is any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between human groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or the absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinction between groups socially defined as races.<sup>13</sup>

Discrimination involves overt behavior, the differential treatment of a group or member of a group on the basis of imputed characteristics.<sup>14</sup> Prejudice and discrimination are usually related in a system of group relations, and are often both manifested in one individual. However, one may occur without the manifestation of the other, at least at the individual level, as shown by Robert Merton in his typology of ethnic prejudice and discrimination.<sup>15</sup> Prejudice may never be translated into overt behavior, because other factors may inhibit its open expression. Discrimination may be practiced because it is expected by one's reference group in a given social situation.

### Role Assignment

The behavior of individuals and groups occurs within a system of social relations. Blumer<sup>16</sup>, Rose<sup>17</sup>, and Meltzer<sup>18</sup>, have defined the social structure in terms of symbolic interaction. Actors assess and interpret their behavior and the behavior of other actors in terms of symbols or shared meanings. In a society such shared meanings develop into social roles — clusters of related meanings and values that guide the actor's behavior in a given social setting and give it congruence with the definitions and behavior of others in the same situation.

Dominant and subordinate groups play roles within a given social structure. Interaction between the groups is based upon these roles having certain normative expectations regarding the reciprocal rights and obligations of the actors in this particular role set. To the extent



that the dominant group has greater power than the subordinate group, it controls the assignment of roles. Those roles which it defines as most valuable, and hence rewarding, it assigns to its own members. The less desirable roles are assigned to the subordinate group. The term "valuable role" is meaningless unless the actor compares his roles with those of other actors in the same system, using the same criteria to judge their relative "worth" on some scale of value. Hence, the statuses and roles of both dominant and subordinate group are intrinsically related through the system of shared meanings and expectations in which they interact. The dominant group can continue to define its status as "high" only in comparison to another group whose status it may correspondingly define as "low".

### Perception

The subordinate group's perception of the kinds of role relationships which it is willing to accept as legitimate, combined with the degree of power which it perceives it possesses, will determine the kinds of reaction which it will have towards the actions of the dominant group.

The role relationship as defined primarily by the dominant group may be congruent with the expectations of the subordinate group. In this case, unequal treatment and negative attitudes may be accepted as normal and natural by the subordinate group.

If the subordinate group changes its perception of the role relationship, and no longer accepts the dominant group's definition as legitimate, it may strive to alter that relationship. If the two actors in the role set do not agree on the interpretation of their roles, if they do not define the situation in the same way, their lines of action are not congruent. Misinterpretation results on both sides (deliberate





or otherwise), and under certain conditions, conflict results. Writers such as Marx<sup>19</sup>, Weber<sup>20</sup>, and Simmel<sup>21</sup>, have analysed from different perspectives the conflicts arising among competitive status groups who do not accept the role relationship as defined, and seek to alter it. In order for the conflict to be resolved and a new accommodative relationship established, a redefinition of the situation must take place, by one or more of the actors involved. The direction which the redefinition takes is determined largely by the degree of power which each actor can utilize to gain his objective.

#### Patterns of Response to Subordinate Group Status

There are several possible reactions which a subordinate group may have to its ascribed status. The direction which this reaction takes depends upon its perception of the legitimacy of its relationship to the dominant group, and upon what degree of power it perceives that it possesses. The researcher has utilized the categories of possible response discussed by Simpson and Yinger<sup>22</sup>, Pettigrew<sup>23</sup>, Allport<sup>24</sup>, and Rose<sup>25</sup>, to discuss four possible forms of role relationships which may be perceived as goals by a subordinate group. One goal need not be held by all members of the group — different segments may hold different goals.

Acceptance. The actor accepts as legitimate the definition of the role relationship in which he plays the role of the subordinate and inferior which has been assigned to him by the dominant group. An example of such a response was that of the lower castes in traditional Hindu society.

Avoidance. The actor rejects the dominant group's definition of the role relationship, and attempts to withdraw from any involvement with



the dominant group on the latter's terms. He attempts to avoid being forced to conform to that definition of himself, through isolating and insulating himself from situations in which he will be required to play a subordinate role. He attempts to confine all his relationships to the subordinate group, to avoid interaction with the dominant group, and to limit association to other subordinate group members who concur with his views. The actor

...may withdraw from participation in the society which contains the values, the social institutions, or the forms of discrimination to which (he) object(s). This withdrawal tends to be accompanied by an attempt to reconstitute a purified form of association limited to other protesters of (his) own kind.<sup>26</sup>

Examples of such responses would be the Hutterites or the Black Muslims of the United States, or the "back to Africa" movement of Marcus Garvey.

Reform. The actor attempts to redefine the role relationship, by seeking to raise the status of the subordinate group to the level of that of the dominant group. Although the role of the subordinate group within the system is perceived as non-legitimate, the basic goals and role of the dominant group are accepted as legitimate. The actor aspires to play the same role as the dominant group, and to pursue the same goals from a position of equal status, i.e. to integrate the subordinate group into all the privileges enjoyed by the members of the dominant group.<sup>27</sup> There is reliance on appeals to the dominant group to apply to the subordinate group the same definitions and values which the dominant group applies to itself. There is emphasis placed on trying to convince the dominant group that it will lose none of its privileges if the subordinate group gains equality.

Such a response is based on the perception by the actor that the rewards accruing to the dominant group are a function of its high status,



but not that this status is intrinsically linked to the control which it must exert over the subordinate group in order to maintain that status, i.e. that the rewards enjoyed by the dominant group as a consequence of the relationship are necessarily based on the maintenance of the comparatively low position of the other group.

Examples of this response would be the early Negro civil rights movement in the United States, including such organizations as the NAACP, National Urban League, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Revolution. The actor attempts to redefine the role relationship by restructuring both the roles of the dominant and subordinate groups to form a new pattern of relationship. The actor questions the legitimacy, not only of the role of the subordinate group, but also of the role of the dominant group. It is perceived that, for the subordinate group to gain the rewards which the dominant group monopolizes, the dominant group must lose some of its privileges. The position of the dominant group is openly threatened, since the redefinition of the role relationship which the subordinate group desires cannot be met within the system of roles that exist. It is perceived by the actor that the rewards the dominant group now enjoys as a consequence of the role relationship are intrinsically linked to the necessity to keep another group in a position of subordination. Examples of such a response would be the Black Panther Party and Al Fatah.

#### Response as Collective Behavior: Social Movements

The goal of acceptance may be viewed as the "normal" response to the prevailing system of dominant/subordinate role relationships, by both the dominant and subordinate groups involved. The other three goals are likely to be regarded as "deviant" or "abnormal" behavior by the dominant





group and those segments of the subordinate group which subscribe to the goal of acceptance. The latter three goals, when discussed in terms of collective response, may assume the form of social movements, or the organized protest against prevailing role relationships.<sup>28</sup>

...a social movement 'represents an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel they have in common' (Toch, 1965, p. 5). These efforts tend to occur in the form of social movements because respectable society offers no redress or solution to the dominant concerns of the individuals involved.<sup>29</sup>

Preconditions for the emergence of a movement. A group is likely to become conscious of its status as a subordinate group when its members perceive that they have little power relative to that of another, dominant group with which it is in interaction.<sup>30</sup>

A subordinate group is not likely to perceive itself as discriminated against when the expectations of its own members are confirmed by the system of role relationships in which they act, i.e. when the definitions of both groups are congruent.<sup>31</sup> Such a perception of discrimination is likely to occur when the expectations of the subordinate group are unconfirmed by that system.<sup>32</sup>

These expectations are likely to be unconfirmed if the subordinate group no longer accepts as legitimate the definition of the role relationship. This is likely to occur in situations where the subordinate group is faced with contradictory expectations and resulting role conflicts. According to Simpson and Yinger, "...contact with other standards, the acquisition of levels of aspiration that are blocked in old status, may destroy acceptance of that status."<sup>33</sup> If the dominant group does not shift its own definitions of the role relationship to conform to these new expectations, the subordinate group, or a segment of it, may develop a sense of relative deprivation.<sup>34</sup> This, in turn, may



influence the subordinate group to withdraw further its acceptance of the legitimacy previously accorded the relationship.<sup>35</sup>

Mobilization. Such situations are the potential occasions for social movements. Several conditions affect the probability of collective action resulting from such a situation. It is likely to result if the subordinate group, or a segment of it, perceives that the "problem" situation is remediable, and that a new role relationship can be instituted through its actions.<sup>36</sup> It is also likely if the subordinate group perceives that there is no other legitimate means of effectively instituting changes in the relationship.

The success of a movement is partially dependent on: (1) the availability of open communication networks among movement members, (2) the degree to which the movement is perceived as applying to issues which are relevant to the members, and (3) the degree to which the movement is perceived as an efficient vehicle for the solution of the problems of the members.<sup>37</sup> These factors all contribute to the motivation of potential members to join a movement, and of existing members to remain committed to it.

The societal context. The existing social structure and ideology prevailing in the larger society are partial determinants of the probability of a movement occurring, and of the direction it will take.<sup>38</sup> A society undergoing rapid social change is likely to give rise to role conflicts. A situation in which old norms and values are failing to accommodate new needs and experiences, is likely to provoke a search for new ground rules to regulate interaction, in order to relieve ambiguity and resolve the contradictory role expectations.





The predominant world view of society and of the movement members' own specific reference groups are likely to influence the definitions of causes and solutions to a problem situation. A problem may be defined as stemming from political, personal (psychiatric), or religious (moral) sources, and the response is defined in similar terms.<sup>39</sup> For example, Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries was profoundly influenced by a religious world view. The Reformation was defined at the time as rising out of disillusionment with the prevailing religious ideology. Twentieth century interpretations of this movement, influenced by the ideological emphases of our own time and society, tend to focus on a political analysis, attributing the upheavals of the Reformation to political and nationalistic motives, and downplaying the importance of the religious convictions held by the actors involved, except as these were held as convenient rationalizations for political manoeuvres.

Ideology. The response of movement members to their perceived situation is likely to become embodied in an ideological statement. Ideology provides the frame of reference for interpreting the problem situation which the movement members perceive as confronting them. Ideology (1) defines the problem, (2) identifies the perceived causes of the problem, and (3) proposes a solution in the form of a program which, if carried out, would eliminate the sources of strain, and result in a new role relationship.<sup>40</sup>

The formation of the tenets of a movement ideology is influenced by the factors discussed in the preceding sections of the chapter. If variations emerge in the ideology expressed within a movement, they are likely to arise out of differing perceptions held by segments of the membership regarding one or more of these factors.



Since the movement is one expressing rejection of the legitimacy of the existing role relationship as defined by the dominant group, it must introduce a new perspective of legitimacy to replace the old. Its ideology defines the kind of role relationship which the movement is willing to accept as legitimate, as the preferred alternative to the existing one. Rather than continuing to accept the definition and assignment of roles by the dominant group, the movement defines and/or assigns valuable roles to its own group.

The ideology of the movement must indicate a means of implementing change in the role relationship. The solution proposed through the ideology is based on the number and efficiency of the lines of action which the members perceive as available to themselves and to the dominant group. The proposed program defines tactics by the use of which the movement might obtain its goal of a new role relationship.

The ideology formulated by a movement is mediated by the life experiences of its membership, and is influenced by the world view of their immediate reference groups and of the larger society.

Tactics. Depending on which response the subordinate group adopts in its attempts to redefine its relationship with the dominant group, it then chooses certain lines of action or behavioral patterns to follow as tactics or means to attaining its goal.

The subordinate group may perceive that a redistribution of power would result from (1) a recognition and use of power which it already latently possesses, (2) a gain in its power through internal growth and organization and/or outside assistance.<sup>41</sup> The tactics employed may be moderate or radical.<sup>42</sup> Moderate tactics are both non-violent and legitimate according to the norms of the dominant group. Radical tactics are violent and/or illegitimate in the perception of the dominant group,



although they are granted legitimacy by the members of the movement, and are therefore considered by them as open lines of action.<sup>43</sup>

According to Rose, "...any power for change that (a movement) exert(s) is likely to stimulate a countervailing power to protect the status quo."<sup>44</sup> The nature of the goals and tactics of a movement will influence the reaction of the dominant group. In turn, the intensity and direction of societal response influences the subsequent goals and tactics adopted by the movement.

If mechanisms exist in the larger society for the incorporation and adaptation of the goals of the movement, it is likely to become institutionalized. Reforms and co-optations by the dominant group undercut the motivation for membership in a movement, and may therefore succeed in dissolving it.<sup>45</sup> However, even if reforms are instituted, a movement may attempt to perpetuate itself; either through rejection of the reform measures, or through altering its own goals.<sup>46</sup>

The absence of such co-optive mechanisms, and the failure of the dominant group to perceive the utility of implementing them, is likely to contribute to the continuation of the movement. Repressive measures of social control are likely to lead to a radicalization of tactics, unless repression reaches such a high level of intensity that the movement is crushed.

The reaction of the dominant group may involve a verbal acceptance of the validity of the movement's grievances, but no effective attempts to implement changes. When moderate appeals through legitimate channels fail to obtain the goals sought, a movement may perceive that its only alternative is to resort to more radical tactics.

Many social movements face a severe tactical dilemma. They can remain within the bounds of legitimacy and non-violence and risk having their aims ignored by a public which will,





perhaps, be preoccupied with the demands of other and more radically oriented movements. Or, they can adopt radical tactics but hazard (1) alienating potential followers from among those who share their disillusionment with the established order but who also share the general cultural condemnation of violent and illegitimate tactics; and (2) creating a backlash among powerful persons....There seems to be no satisfactory resting place between the two horns of the dilemma.<sup>47</sup>

Conflicts within a movement. Although it is likely that group members will claim to represent the same goal and basic interests of all movement members, factions are likely to be created when differences arise over the analysis of the sources of the problem situation, and over the means for eliminating those sources. Differing definitions and perspectives may result in a weakening of the movement through internal struggles. Several splinter groups may emerge eventually, each pursuing a different goal. The differing goals and responses of conflicting factions are likely to be expressed through variations in ideology.

Two factors affecting the probability of factional division are (1) the number of conflicting issues, and (2) the extent to which the issues are central or peripheral to the movement.

A multiplicity of issues causing conflict is less likely to result in factionalism than is the existence of one issue. According to Coser,

If...one conflict cuts through a group, dividing the members into two hostile camps...the single cleavage will very probably put into question the basic consensual agreement, thus endangering the continued existence of the group.<sup>48</sup>

Interdependence of antagonistic groups and the "crisscrossing" of multiple interests and conflicts act to "sew together" the group as a whole, where disintegration is more likely to occur along one primary line of cleavage.<sup>49</sup>



In Coser's words, "Conflicts arising within the same consensual framework are likely to have a very different impact upon the relationship than those which put the basic consensus in question."<sup>50</sup> For example, conflicts over tactics are likely to be more severe if the tactical differences are based on differing definitions of the sources of the problem situation. This kind of conflict occurred when Stokely Carmichael was expelled from the Black Panther Party after he and Eldridge Cleaver disagreed over the formation of coalitions with other groups. Carmichael, identifying the source of Black oppression as racism, wished to form a united front with other Black organizations, and exclude Whites. Cleaver, identifying the source of Black oppression as capitalism, wished to coalesce with radical White groups such as Weatherman, excluding moderate, reformist Black organizations and Black cultural nationalists.

In the next chapter, the researcher intends to utilize this conceptual framework to discuss the sex role relationship, and women as a subordinate group within that relationship.





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## CHAPTER II

### THE CASE OF WOMEN AS A SUBORDINATE GROUP

#### I. WOMEN DEFINED AS A SUBORDINATE GROUP

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the case of women as a subordinate group. In an attempt to narrow the discussion to within reasonable limits, the position of women in Western European and North American society will be the focus of analysis. The researcher will attempt to show that men and women interact in a relationship characterized by the dominance of men and the subordination of women. Men, as an aggregate, define and monopolize the higher statuses and more valued roles that form the structure of society. To do so, this aggregate uses its greater power to minimize, and especially, to control the alternatives for action which women may possess.

#### The Black Analogy

In an analysis of the sex role relationship, it might be useful to keep in mind analogies with other dominant/subordinate relationships, remembering that analogies are partial resemblances, not intended to be totally coincident.<sup>1</sup> One such analogy was that made in 1951 by Helen Hacker, who compared women to blacks.<sup>2</sup>

Both women and blacks are groups having high social visibility, a function of the symbolic cues which distinguish them from the dominant group. Blacks are marked by skin colour and other "racial" characteristics, women by secondary sex characteristics, which are exaggerated by an upbringing in a society which discourages muscular development for



women. Physical differences are supplemented by distinctive dress, manners, and a code of etiquette between the dominant and subordinate groups.

Both blacks and women are imputed with the ascribed characteristics of inferior intelligence and a scarcity of genius. They are said to be emotional and irresponsible, and incapable of rational thought. Blacks are considered to be prone to "instinctual gratification", women are intuitive. Blacks are commonly stereotyped as "inferior" to whites, women are "weaker" — physically, mentally, and emotionally — as compared to men.

Their low status is rationalized on the grounds that they are "all right in their place" (a woman's place is in the home), and on the myth of the contented Negro and the contented woman, who after all, really like to be subordinate, and therefore deserve what they like. Besides, they are doing the tasks for which they are best suited. Accommodation attitudes of these groups include a flattering, deferential manner; concealment of real feelings (feminine wiles); a fake show of ignorance and helplessness; and a "careful study of points at which the dominant group is susceptible to influence",<sup>3</sup> by which they can "outwit" the white folks or menfolks in order to obtain petty rewards.

Discriminations are much the same: limitations on education (so they can "fit their place" in society); confinement to traditional jobs in which they are barred from supervisory positions and from competition with the dominant group; deprivation of political influence; subjection to social and professional segregation.

Furthermore, both roles are no longer as clearly defined as they once were, but are in flux as a result of social change, with consequent conflict between their traditionally ascribed status, and new statuses made possible by structural changes in the society.





### Clarification of the Terms "Minority Group" and "Subordinate Group"

The comparison made by Hacker has been cited here to show that there are points of comparison between women and other subordinate groups. The researcher is not making the claim that the case of women is completely analogous to that of other subordinate groups. Discussions of racial and cultural groupings often go under the label of "minority group relations". It can be argued that women do not share all of the characteristics that are commonly assigned to describe minority groups — for example, endogamy. However, groups characterized as "minority groups" do share with women the characteristic of low status as compared to a dominant group, a status which results from the power of the dominant group to control their alternatives. This subordinate position results in some other similarities in their life chances. Areas of similarity include: legal discrimination and economic exploitation, rationalization by the dominant group of their inferiority through reference to religious and biological "proofs", and a pattern of socialization which practically ensures their inferiority by the standards of the dominant group — setting up the effects of a vicious circle. These areas will be discussed as they refer specifically to women, in the remainder of the chapter.<sup>4</sup>

## II. THE SEX ROLE RELATIONSHIP ANALYSED IN TERMS OF POWER

### Legal Position of Women

Historically, in Europe and North America, woman has existed in a patriarchal system; for the bulk of that history having the status of a chattel, passing from father to husband to son with few or no political, legal, or economic rights of her own.<sup>5</sup>



Prior to the passage of the Married Women's Act<sup>6</sup>, a woman's rights and liabilities both in civil and criminal law, were assumed by her husband, under the Common Law principle of couverture. Her legal existence as an individual was suspended in marriage, and she was in the same legal category as minors and mental deficientes. The husband and wife were declared to be one person in law, but that one person was defined as the husband. The wife could own property, but could not dispose of it, although her husband could. Her husband had custody of her person, and sole guardianship of her children. He also had the right to any income that she might earn. Although she could inherit from her husband, he had larger inheritance rights to her property than vice versa.<sup>7</sup>

Since the passage of that Act, women have had the same legal rights and liabilities as men, may control their own property and enter into contracts. However, women still face some legal disabilities.

A woman must still maintain the same domicile as her husband. The principle of unity of domicile is based on the Common Law principle of "unity of spouses" as a single legal entity. A wife's domicile is legally that of her husband, and changes as he changes his. In this respect, a woman is still in the same position as a minor. If she refuses to maintain his domicile, she may legally be charged with desertion.<sup>8</sup> The same conditions do not apply to a husband.

Real equality under the law cannot exist without economic independence, and many married women are not independent. They are defined as financially dependent on their husbands if they are not working at paid employment, even though they contribute in large degree to the accumulation of family assets through their unpaid labour in the home. These contributions are ignored under present laws regarding property rights. Under the system of separate property now in existence in all



provinces except Quebec, a husband's earnings and savings are his private property.<sup>9</sup> A widow has no automatic inheritance rights to the assets she helped her husband to accumulate. If divorced or separated, a woman has only her rights to maintenance. Because she is given the responsibility for childrearing, her own employment is likely to be sporadic, so that she does not have the same opportunities as her spouse to acquire assets of her own through steady employment.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the Canada and Quebec pension plans provide a pension for the widow of a contributor. If a divorce occurs, the former wife loses all claim to this pension. If the divorce should occur late in life, she may not have time to build up an adequate pension through her own employment.<sup>11</sup>

Women are also at a disadvantage in obtaining credit. Women are often unable to obtain mortgages in their own names, but must have the vouching signature of a man, even if divorced or self-supporting.<sup>12</sup> They also often lose their own credit cards on marriage, even if there is no change in their employment. Such refusal to grant credit is not based on any existing law, but on the assumption that women, as a group, are financially dependent on men, and an unwillingness to investigate the possibility that an individual woman might be self-supporting.

A wife while living with her husband has an implied power to pledge his credit for necessities for herself and for the needs of the household....unless the husband can show that she has not his authority.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, her "implied" power is no power at all, since her husband needs merely to show that he has told tradespeople not to grant her credit, or that he has forbidden her to pledge his credit.

Under the Divorce Act of 1968, maintenance orders may be issued against either the husband or wife. It might be noted that the husband





is usually ordered to pay maintenance, because he is more likely to be employed than the wife, and because she is usually given the responsibility of the custody of the children. According to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada\*, the amounts of maintenance set by the courts are usually small. In the provinces where maintenance amounts are set by statute, the maximum amounts vary from \$30 to \$75 per week for the wife, and from \$15 to \$30 per week per child.<sup>14</sup> In practice, maintenance orders are difficult to enforce<sup>15</sup>, especially if the husband has little property, is unemployed, or cannot be located. If a husband has left the province, it is the wife's responsibility to trace him — at her own expense. The result is that women must often rely on public assistance for the support of themselves and their children, if the husband is of low income and/or cannot be found.

Two additional points regarding women's legal status might be noted. First, women have only become enfranchised in this century. Women won the Dominion Franchise in Canada on May 24, 1918. It was the culmination of a Suffrage movement which lasted close to 70 years, and spanned Canada, Britain, and the United States. One of the issues of the movement was a debate concerning the question of whether women were or were not human, and therefore eligible for suffrage.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, women continue to be legally defined according to their relationship to a male. A woman inherits the surname of her father, if she is legitimate, upon birth. Her citizenship is also determined by that of her father. Upon her marriage, she takes the surname of her husband. In some states in the United States, this change of name is legally

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\*For the remainder of the thesis, the above will be referred to as the Royal Commission Report.



binding.<sup>17</sup> In Canada, the procedure is customary, not compulsory under law, but the custom is so deeply entrenched that it is implicit in some legislative and administrative practices, for example, in the issuing of passports.<sup>18</sup>

### Societally Accepted Analyses of Female Inferiority

Influence of religious values. The religious values of Judaism and Christianity helped to lay the basis for the legal system in which women were subject to patriarchal control. These values have traditionally provided the ultimate legitimating force for placing and keeping women in a subordinate position. This condition of subservience is "natural" and unalterable, because it is decreed by the ultimate source of supernatural authority. Although the central importance of organized religion as a moral force today has declined, these values regarding sex roles have become part of our cultural belief system, a "nonconscious ideology" which both men and women accept without question.

These religious values have enjoined women to be chaste before marriage, and to be faithful within marriage, to be obedient to their husbands, and to bear children for their husbands as their ordained duty. Although the Christian ethic has also prescribed chastity and fidelity upon the male, the simultaneous operation of the sexual double standard negates this moral obligation.<sup>19</sup>

Two factors are important to consider regarding the Judaic tradition and its treatment of women. First, in a patriarchal society, descent is measured from the male side of the family. Emphasis is placed on having male children to retain the name of the male parent, to continue his line, and to inherit his property. Women, consequently, are not valued in themselves, but as producers of male heirs. However, a



male, concerned with passing on his inheritance to his male descendants, is confronted with a problem — is he or is he not the biological progenitor of his wife's children? In order to give maximal assurance that he is the biological father of these offspring, he must have control of the reproductive functions of the female. The religious injunctions of chastity and obedience, and the penalties imposed for breaches of their observance, served to establish the legitimacy of such property rights.

This emphasis on property rights is evident in Mosaic law, in the laws regarding marriage, divorce, adultery, the Levirate, and even rape. The crime of rape was considered primarily one against the property rights of another man, rather than as one against the person of the woman involved (see Deuteronomy 22). If the woman involved was betrothed to another man, the rapist's punishment was death, because he violated another man's wife. If the woman was a virgin who was not betrothed, he might compensate for his crime by marrying her, and paying her father "fifty shekels of silver". In this way he legitimized his sexual access to her. Marriage was a necessity, since her marriageability rested on the proof of first and exclusive ownership, i.e. her virginity.

The second factor which is prominent in the Judaic tradition is the strong connection between women, sex, and sin.<sup>20</sup> One of the major themes found throughout the Bible is woman as temptress — drawing man away from the path of God, from righteousness and purity, into lewdness and defilement. In Proverbs and Jeremiah, evil is personified as a harlot leading men into temptation and ruin. Men are manipulated by women who use their sexual powers to obtain what they want — Ruth, Esther, Jezebel, Delilah, Herodias, Salome. It might be noted that sexual power was the only way these women could obtain their goals, since in a





patriarchal society they did not have the rights and freedoms of men, and their only security lay in men's satisfaction with their sexual services. The tendency to equate women with sexual sin may also be partly explained as a projective technique to shift blame for sexual wrongdoing from men to women. This technique is still prevalent today.

Judaism shared the perception of other primitive societies that women were unclean. There were many taboos surrounding menstruation and childbirth which women had to observe, and Job 4:4 asks, "How can he be clean that is born of woman?"

Although the teachings of Christ were equalitarian, the early Christian church, under the guidance of St. Paul, reinforced the older Judaic tradition.

...the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband....For a man...is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 1 Corinthians 11.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men: she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. 1 Timothy 2.

One of the premises of the Christian faith is that conception is a sin (i.e. sex is a sin), from which children must be cleansed by baptism. St. Paul grudgingly recognized that unrelieved sexual tensions might interfere with one's concentration on being saved, so permitted marriages among his followers, although he preferred celibacy as the ideal.

The highest Christian ideals for women were at cross-purposes, and were both embodied in one image, that of the chaste, virginal Mary, mother of Christ. The virtues of virginity and motherhood were both highly extolled, but the ideal was impossible to emulate simultaneously. In



the compromise, motherhood was recognized as a necessity, but sex was a necessary evil to attain that desired end.

Regarding women, the founders of the new denominations of the Protestant Reformation did not deviate from the position of the Catholic church. Martin Luther's pronouncement was, "If a woman grows weary and at last dies from childbearing, it matters not. Let her only die from bearing, she is there to do it." In 1558, John Knox wrote a tract entitled The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women.<sup>21</sup> In the nineteenth century, the Mormon church returned to the overt polygynous patriarchy of the Old Testament.

The view of women as chattels in a patriarchal system was also closely related to two other phenomena, those of illegitimacy and prostitution. In a patriarchal society, there is no recognized mechanism to provide for the social paternity of a biologically illegitimate child. It is, in effect, nobody's child, and poses problems in terms of descent, inheritance, and support.<sup>22</sup> Men have not been compelled to recognize their illegitimate offspring, nor to provide for them on an equal basis with their legitimate heirs. An illegitimate pregnancy is the sole responsibility of the female involved — "She got herself pregnant". Both the female and her offspring are socially penalized, the progenitor is not. Such penalties act as a deterrent to engaging in intercourse outside of marriage — for the female.<sup>23</sup>

The chastity of women chosen to produce legitimate heirs is protected at the expense of another type of woman — the prostitute. The prostitute is condemned for her immorality, shunned as a social pariah, and subject to harassment and arrest for soliciting. Her customers are not. She also appears to be necessary in a system which enjoins chastity



and fidelity upon women, but believes that the male urge for sexual gratification is necessary and natural, both within and outside the bounds of marriage. The division of women into the categories of "good" and "bad" according to their sexual exclusivity is important for purposes of control. A woman must be "good", or she will lose her value as private property. The prostitute belongs exclusively to no man, and since she is disqualified from consideration for matrimony, she is barred from any legitimate, "responsible" status in society. These women become the instrument through which male sexual needs are gratified outside of marriage, and bear the social stigma for such activity as well.

Most streetwalkers are drawn from the lower classes of society, and enter the trade because their bodies are the only marketable commodity which they have to sell in exchange for a livelihood.<sup>24</sup> Often, the prostitute is not even an independent entrepreneur, for she is controlled by male pimps or syndicates who use her labour to make profits for themselves. It is also interesting to note that even males who are not individually in a position to control other males, may still buy the body of a woman and thereby exercise power over her.<sup>25</sup>

Influence of Freudian psychology. Several modern, "scientific" theories have emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to lend new credibility and support to the traditional religious beliefs regarding the doctrine of innate differences between men and women.

Sigmund Freud's analysis of the human personality has been one of the greatest influences on the development of psychology in North America. Freudian psychology, in a somewhat diluted form, has also been heavily popularized in this society, and his basic concepts and "insights" receive wide, uncritical exposure in the educational system.





His original concepts have been used by many followers, further entrenching their credibility.<sup>26</sup> Some of his tenets have achieved almost the same unquestioning acceptance as folk beliefs, at least among the lay public. His theory of female personality and sexuality is one of his most widely accepted theories.<sup>27</sup>

Freud viewed the biological differences between men and women as the basis of personality formation and differences between "male" and "female" personalities. In his writings, he continually refers to women as "castrates", a term which correctly conveys Freud's perception of women as incomplete men, and therefore inferior and inadequate. Woman's personality development revolved around her coming to accept the fact of her own castration, and the sublimation of her unattainable wish for her own penis, into the wish for identification with a man or male baby, a "surrogate penis". In order to come to terms with her "penis envy" and to "adjust" satisfactorily, she must find her fulfillment vicariously through the achievements of her husband or son. Adjustment basically equals resignation to the reality of one's own inferiority. Women are presented as intellectually inferior to men, incapable of developing to the same degree, and bound by the deficiencies of their own biology to serve a primarily sexual function as an agent of reproduction.

In his preoccupation with biological determinism, Freud failed to consider that what passed for "penis envy" might really be the envy of the socially restricted and repressed, directed towards those who had greater freedoms than they, and who had actual control over them. The subordinate women in the Vienna of Freud's day might wish, not for a penis, but for the rights to which it appeared that only those with penises were entitled. The principle of identification with the aggressor might better explain this envy, this desire to emulate, as



identification, or a wish to identify, with a figure of real social power.<sup>28</sup>

Although he specifically ignored the social factors affecting the behavior of women, Freud's generalizations were based on the values of his own culture; values which were not universal, either geographically or historically, but which shaped his own perceptions almost exclusively. His emphasis on personality development as a function of sexuality, and his observations that his patients' problems sprang from sexual sources, would appear to reflect the denial and repression of sex in his own culture, and a consequent covert preoccupation with it.

Freud's theories were drawn from a small sample of abnormal cases, a self-selected sample of atypical individuals whom he treated. From his patients and from his own self-analysis, he formulated conclusions which were generalized to a larger "normal" population. (It might be noted that the definitions of what constitutes normal and abnormal behavior are also individual and cultural, not absolute.)

The theories he formulated through insight and intuition, Freud never found necessary to test empirically. For example, his analysis of the castration complex was based on a case study of one child. Freud himself did not treat the boy, but obtained his data from the boy's father — a man who was himself in therapy, and giving his son therapy under Freud's second-hand direction.

Neither did Freud employ experimental design, nor controlled observation techniques. His data consisted of the verbalizations and expressive behavior of his own patients. He kept no verbatim record in his therapy sessions, preferring to rely on his own ability to recall and record the "significant" material afterwards.<sup>29</sup> There is no reason to believe that his recall would not be selective according to his own



biases. Although he presented conclusions, he gave no account of his methods of analysis. There is no way to test the reliability and validity of his findings through replication, and no way to determine how much of his analysis evolved from a subjectively biased interpretation of his patients' verbalizations.

In 1952, H.J. Eysenck<sup>30</sup> reported the results of an "outcome of therapy" study of neurotics which showed that, of patients who received psychoanalysis, the improvement rate was 44%, while 72% of the patients who received no treatment improved spontaneously. These findings have not since been refuted, but have subsequently been confirmed by other studies.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the limitations of Freudian theory, it has achieved popular acceptance as an explanation of human behavior, an explanation which has an air of finality about it, since lay people are incapable of effectively questioning its validity. It is difficult for someone who is not a professional psychologist or psychiatrist to refute generalizations that are labelled as "scientific". In our society, science is respected as a major truth source. Lay people presume that they lack the specialized knowledge to challenge or deny the theories presented to them by "experts". Besides, Freudian theory can very effectively discredit the individual's arguments, by implying that they are merely her own defences against the truth.

Ultimately, Freudian theory is convenient — it offers an explanation of female behavior that is grounded in biological determinism — that "anatomy is destiny", that women's personality and temperament are immutably fixed by their physiology. Any discontent with their consequent role is a personal problem, a failure to adjust, not a function of the expectations of the culture, nor of the structure of the social system.





Biological determinism. The argument used by the biological determinists is based on the assumption that there are inborn genetic differences, hormonal and/or chromosomal, between men and women. Because of these differences, men and women display different temperaments and different behavioral patterns, suiting them to play different roles.

This argument cannot explain the cross cultural differences found in the roles that men and women play. The classic study of these variations is found in Mead's book, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies.<sup>32</sup> Mead has also reported that, although men and women vary cross culturally in the roles they play, invariably the roles which men play have more prestige in that culture.<sup>33</sup>

In absolute physical terms, men may possess more physical strength than women, based on heavier musculature. In our society, this difference is exaggerated because women are discouraged from developing physical strength, co-ordination, and endurance. In other societies, and at other times in our own, these absolute differences in strength have not been the major determinant of work assignment. In peasant agricultural economies, women do heavy field labour. Up until the passing of twentieth century labour laws in our society, women worked as long hours under the same or worse conditions as men, including work in the foundries and mines.<sup>34</sup>

Women and men differ in their hormonal balance, because of the relative differences in the amounts of male and female sex hormones. These differences in physiological state are purported to cause differences in male and female behavior and temperament. It is even suggested that women are incapable of handling heavy responsibilities because hormonal imbalances in their menstrual cycle make them irrational and



emotionally unstable.<sup>35</sup>

Women do undergo physiological changes in the menstrual cycle and menopause, and these changes are accompanied by mental and emotional distress that range in the female population from non-existent to severe. It is an open question as to how much the side effects are caused by the physiological state, or by cultural values surrounding menstruation and menopause. Menstruation is still referred to as "the curse", and many girls receive instruction about it in much the same attitudes of fear, ignorance and distaste that they are taught about sex. Menopause signals the end of childbearing and socially defined sexual attractiveness, which are two major components of the female role — social reasons why menopause might trigger an emotional crisis in the life of a woman.

Men also have hormonal changes and imbalances. For example, John F. Kennedy suffered from adrenal insufficiency. Men undergo a climacteric phase similar in nature to the female menopause in the late 40's and early 50's. It is never cited as a cause of lowered work efficiency and impaired decision making capacity.

A study done by Schachter and Singer in 1962<sup>36</sup> showed that a particular state of physiological readiness can lead to several different emotional states as manifested by outward behavior, depending upon the stimuli presented in the social situation. Subjects given shots of adrenalin, which produced one physiological state, experienced reactions of fear, anger, or euphoria, depending upon the cues presented to them by other individuals interacting in the same situation. Their behavior was determined by the behavior of others, not by their physiological state.

Even if there were found to be average biological differences between the sexes, it would not justify judging each individual by the assumed average differences between the groups. There may be found a



range of biological differences between males and females, and between individuals of the same sex, even as there is such a range and overlap between and within racial groupings.

The biological argument is sometimes presented in the form of a comparison between human behavior and that of other animals. For example, the sex role behavior of some primate species is described, and declared the natural pattern for humans, having been set by evolution and thus immutable because of heredity.

An anthropologist, Lionel Tiger, in his book Men in Groups<sup>37</sup>, posits that the capacity of the human male to "bond" into social units is genetically fixed by evolutionary natural selection, is the basis of group behavior, and has enabled men to build civilization. Females, genetically lacking this capacity to "bond" co-operatively, are therefore inherently incapable of such social activity. Professor Tiger based his argument on generalizations from the behavior of rhesus monkeys and baboons. However, as shown by Mitchell<sup>38</sup>, most other primates do not follow this male bonding behavior. The argument cannot be used that the primates closest to man on the evolutionary scale will invariably display male bonding behavior, since gorillas, chimpanzees, gibbons, and orangutans do not. Neither do primates low on the evolutionary scale display bonding behavior as a prototypical form from which later primates may have diverged — for example, marmosets and tamarins do not display this behavior. Not even all species of baboon live in hordes where male bonding occurs — for example, the hamadryas baboon does not.

The examples of baboon behavior to "prove" that human males are naturally more aggressive, naturally polygynous, and naturally incapable of mothering behavior towards infants, can be countered with other examples from the primate world. Gibbons are monogamous, and gorillas







live in small communal groups where sex is infrequent, uncompetitive, and non-exclusive. Female tamarins are more aggressive and competitive than males. Titi monkeys, night monkeys, and marmosets display male "mothering" behavior.

Generalizations from primate to human behavior is hazardous, because little or no human behavior can be conclusively shown to stem from instinctive, genetically based sources. Humans engage in a long and complex process of learning the normative expectations of others in their socio-cultural milieu. Their self concept and their behavior is shaped by these expectations and the roles that they learn to play in interaction with others. Human behavior is often best explained in terms of the social situation rather than genetic inheritance.

#### Socialization to Be Secondary

The doctrine of free will, as applied to women, declares that women are free to be anything they choose to be. Whatever their position, they have made a free choice, and on these grounds they cannot be considered a subordinate group, since the decision to play certain roles has been theirs alone.

The answer to such an argument is that actors do make conscious decisions concerning their courses of action, but that any decision made is a function of the alternatives which the actor perceives as available to him, and which are most efficient in obtaining his goal. The "free choices" that women make in their lives are determined by the nature of the sex role relationship in which they are placed; a relationship determined by normative expectations and structural conditions. Not only are women's goals societally defined through the roles they are expected and socialized to play, but their motivation to play these roles are



societally controlled through a system of rewards and punishments. That is, the motivation to choose certain alternatives is controlled through setting penalties for choosing any but the "correct" or "accepted" alternative, thus effectively committing the lines of action which women perceive as available to them.

This is not to deny that men as well as women are sex-typed, but their role is more highly valued in society, with more alternatives available, and with more power. To state that men and women interact in a dominant/subordinate group relationship is not to imply that every individual man consciously and deliberately discriminates against all women, or against the women over whom he has power personally. However, because of the system of roles in which they interact, the male, as individual and group, reaps the rewards of that system.<sup>39</sup> They are socialized for dominance, in the same way that women are socialized for subordination. Because of the socialization process, both groups tend as a whole to accept their respective positions as natural. As Grimshaw states:

There are classes of both individual and group relations of superordination/subordination which persist for long periods of time without substantial attempts by the subordinate party to change the relationship.<sup>40</sup>

That this particular instance of a dominant/subordinate relationship has persisted for so long a time was understood as the result of socialization as early as 1869 by John Stuart Mill in his treatise on The Subjection of Women.<sup>41</sup> Mill argued that the socialization which women receive results in "enslaving their minds", and effectively eliminating any chance for rebellion against their position of inferiority, since they believed it was "natural".



A panel discussion on a 1964 symposium entitled The Potential of Woman<sup>42</sup> was presented with the question "What is a woman?". The composite answer of the panelists, who were all male (including a psychiatrist, a professor of medical psychology, and an "author philosopher"), was that woman is a man's wife, a man's mother, and a man's mistress.

Women undergo a socialization process in which they are taught from infancy that their role is to be wife-mother-mistress (sexual object), and to depend upon men for emotional, financial and physical security. Their social status rests on their relationships with men; and so they learn to define themselves in terms of their husbands and the children they bear them. That they do so is not in compensation for their lack of a penis, but because the system of expectations in which they act leaves them no societally acceptable alternative.

According to McCandless<sup>43</sup>, adults expect sex differences in behavior by the age of 18 months in children, and parents begin the procedure of selective reinforcement of such sex-appropriate behavior very early.

Many subtle as well as obvious pressures are placed on children to produce such differences. Sex-typing precedes and is a part of identification, and results from a pattern of rewards and punishments administered by parents, teachers, older brothers and sisters, and playmates.<sup>44</sup>

Fathers tend to concentrate play activity on their sons, and to play active, rough games with them. Mothers play with their daughters more often than their sons, and also include their daughters in their work activity at an early age — encouraging them to "help mother" at her household duties.

Toys bought for girls and boys accent these differences. Through their toys, play activity, and by example, boys are encouraged to be competitive, aggressive, independent, and capable of solving problems. Through manipulating artifacts and situations in play, they achieve an





early feeling of mastery over their environment. Girls are encouraged to be passive, dependent, and to look to others for leadership and approval. Toys call more for maintenance than creative manipulation. Early training in domestic skills is impressed on little girls through caring for toy household equipment, feeding and clothing dolls.<sup>45</sup> According to McCandless: "Differential pressures are put on the two sexes for conformity, lack of aggression, quietness, neatness, and good manners, girls being subjected to more pressure than boys."<sup>46</sup>

McCandless further states that "...in our culture, the feminine role is less highly regarded than the masculine".<sup>47</sup> He cites, in support of this, a study by D.G. Brown<sup>48</sup>, which, in a test of sex-role preferences, found that a majority of girls showed rejection of the female role, and preference for the male role, but that boys did not show the same preference for the female role. These findings were confirmed by Hartup and Zook.<sup>49</sup>

Dager<sup>50</sup> suggests that girl children experience conflicts in their socialization because they come to perceive that the female role is not valued as highly as the male. With regard to the female child,

...although she initially sees the mother's sex role as containing the most power (Emmerich, 1959), as she increases in age she begins to perceive the father's sex role as being more powerful (Emmerich, 1961) and sees herself as having less power than a sibling brother (Emmerich, 1959). Such evidence gives credence to the notion that males enjoy a superior position (Parsons, 1954; Brown, 1958) with privileges not open to females.<sup>51</sup>

A study by Bennet and Cohen, cited by Dager,"...found that both men and women share a common perception of the male role and that, as maturity approaches, both male and female begin to attach greater value to masculine traits."<sup>52</sup> A study by Broverman et.al. found further evidence that male characteristics are rated more highly than female. They found



that, in response to a sex role questionnaire, professionals in clinical psychology "...assigned a mentally healthy adult and a mentally healthy male the same characteristics, but a mentally healthy female was seen as passive, emotional, dependent, less competitive, non-objective, submissive and more easily influenced"<sup>53</sup>, characteristics which they had also assigned to a mentally unhealthy adult.

Women tend to accept this definition of themselves as inferior. Goldberg<sup>54</sup> asked female college students to rate a number of professional articles in six fields, and found that they rated articles attributed to male authors more highly than the same articles when they were attributed to female authors. Articles supposedly written by women in traditionally "female" areas of endeavour such as dietetics and elementary school education, were downgraded as well as articles supposedly written in traditionally "male" areas of competence, such as law and city planning.

A girl child learns that the wife-mother role is one of low status, but also that it is the only legitimate role to which she may aspire. A particular set of characteristics appears to facilitate adaptation to this role. Douvan suggests that "...a too clear or distinct self-definition during adolescence might be maladaptive, in that a girl must remain malleable enough to 'fit' the value system of her potential future spouse."<sup>55</sup> To adapt to such a role requires that women not have a strong sense of their own identity. It then becomes relatively easy to take up the instant identity provided by one's relationship to a husband and children. In this manner, the conditioning which female children undergo facilitates control over them, since they are made psychologically dependent upon men for their very identity, which is validated only through their relationship to men.<sup>56</sup>



Characteristics usually considered "feminine" are those cultivated to help women fit this role. Feminine women are ideally passive, affectionate, supportive, nurturant, non-competitive, non-assertive, intuitive, tactful, co-operative (willing to compromise), and concerned with others' welfare.<sup>57</sup> Such characteristics are usually termed "complementary", meaning that they complement or cater to what are considered male needs, providing an emotionally secure, non-threatening environment for the male. Women are also considered to be dependent, illogical, unstable, vain (narcissistic), masochistic (according to the disciples of Freud), and needing the leadership and approval of males. These characteristics act as a foil by which male virtues attain a higher value by comparison, validating male superiority.

These characteristics and values are inculcated in female children, and are to a large extent internalized. They are also to some extent expressed through "accommodative attitudes" to their position, as mentioned earlier in the comparison between women and blacks. Women know what is expected of them, and act accordingly, knowing that if they "play the game", they will be rewarded, or at least not penalized for trying to "be equal" to men.

#### Formal Education

The socialization that a girl child receives at home is continued in her formal education. Most elementary school teachers are women, and they tend to reward the passivity, conformity, and co-operativeness that are inculcated in little girls at home, and which also make coping with large classes easier for the teacher. Girls are "better" students than boys in their early school years because their socialization patterns make it easier for them to fit into the educational system at this age.<sup>58</sup>





In high school, the positions are reversed. Here, boys are confronted with decisions about preparing for their future life's work. At the same time, girls discover that academic excellence is not desirable for them if they are to attract the favorable attention of boys. They also learn that, even if they did obtain a good education, the best jobs financially and prestige-wise are barred to them. They know that it is culturally expected that their future husbands will provide for them financially. Education as preparation for a career is meaningless to girls as long as they perceive that education is necessary to earn a good living, but that a man will earn that living for them. Education has little or no relationship to what they themselves are expected to become. In terms of the power relationship between men and women, through obeying these expectations, and regarding her education as secondary, a young woman loses one of her best alternatives to dependence on a man — job training for future self-support. Even if she did obtain training, however, her job opportunities would not be equal to those of men.<sup>59</sup>

The school system reinforces cultural beliefs regarding sex differences, and shapes the child's self image to fit the stereotype. School textbooks suggest many and varied role models for boys in terms of depicting active behavior and future occupations. The few presented to girls are of the passive type, and are in a supportive relationship to some primary, central male role, e.g. nurse, secretary, mother, or sister. Most professions are portrayed as male, with the exception of traditionally female professions such as librarian.

"Streaming" or "channelling", first visible in the toys given little girls and boys in kindergarten, increases through secondary school and college.<sup>60</sup> The segregation of sexes increases at advanced levels



where children take preparatory courses for future careers. School counsellors often aid this channelling, since they suggest appropriate future careers for girls and boys, do little to contradict job stereotypes, and are careful to emphasize how a girl's career will or will not dovetail with her family responsibilities.<sup>61</sup> Informal norms based on sex stereotypes in occupation, guide girls into occupational training courses in "business training", i.e. typing, shorthand, bookkeeping; keypunching; hairdressing; sewing and dress design. Boys are steered into training courses which will prepare them for the skilled trades. In academic college preparatory courses there is a strong tendency for girls to study the arts and social sciences, and for boys to study mathematics, the basic and applied sciences.

The Royal Commission Report<sup>62</sup> states that in 1967-68, only 34.2% of all undergraduate college students in Canada were girls, despite the fact that more girls than boys graduate from high school. Female enrolment in Masters' programs was 20%, and in Doctoral programs only 8% of the students were women. In university, men are more likely than women to enter training for a specific occupation — engineering, law, medicine, commerce, agriculture. Women specialize in lower proportions than do men — usually in library science, household economics, elementary school education — and more often take a general liberal arts education which leaves them occupationally trained for nothing, but supposedly serves to make them better intellectual companions for the husbands they have come to university to find.

The argument is sometimes used that boys and girls have different natural aptitudes that suit them for stereotyped educations and jobs.

The Royal Commission Report states that:



Tests measuring various aptitudes and abilities show some differences between the sexes but the scores also indicate wide differences among members of each sex group, and there is extensive overlapping between the groups. Differences and similarities observed from objective measurements do not permit valid predictions of individual behaviour on the basis of sex alone.<sup>63</sup>

There is also a question of how much the variation found in aptitudes and abilities is induced by differential training and encouragement for male and female children, and how much they reflect a "natural" difference.

The Royal Commission Report found that girls in school tend to have low occupational expectations for themselves, even if they express interest in challenging jobs with a high degree of responsibility, prestige, and pay.<sup>64</sup> Their "socialization to be secondary" also shows in many parents' attitude towards higher education for a daughter. They question her need for an education, assuming that "she is only going to get married." If finances make it necessary to choose between further education for a son or daughter, the boy is usually given preference. Girls themselves do not grow up with the expectation of having permanent careers of their own, but to find a job to "mark time" until they get married, and to "fall back on" in case of widowhood or boredom in middle age. They face at adolescence and in college a conflict between serious commitment to a career, and popularity with men. Their peer groups usually tend to reinforce the cultural value that women can only achieve a legitimate status through marriage.

#### Courtship and the Politics of Sex

Kin groups in this society play a comparatively small part in mate selection. Girls are increasingly on their own when seeking a spouse, yet they are still unable to "choose" their spouses. Because







the initiative is still in the hands of the male in both dating and mate selection, women are forced into a position both of indirectly manipulating men in an effort to gain a commitment from them, and of being the passive objects of their choice. The courtship "game" is a very serious one for women, because their present and future status hinges upon the outcome.

Women define themselves and are defined by others according to their relationship to a man. To be a popular date, to be going steady, to be engaged or married, or in the subculture of the sexual revolution, to be living with a man, all give status "through proximity". Young women are under considerable pressure to achieve some type of publicly recognized relationship with a man. Women having no such relationship may be variously labelled, depending upon the circumstances, as a prostitute, a lesbian, or simply a reject. Ultimately, the connotations of the word "spinster" are much different to those of the word "bachelor". The penalties for failure to achieve the acceptable identity that comes with male approval and acceptance are perceived as high by most women.

This puts women at a disadvantage in dating and courtship situations. Blau, in his analysis of Exchange and Power in Social Life<sup>65</sup>, made an "Excursus on Love"<sup>66</sup> in which he discussed the power relationships involved in the dating system. Blau argues that boys are more likely to consider sexual exploitations or "conquest" as a primary reason for dating, and to wish to avoid a commitment to a girl. The girl desires commitment, but realizes that she must manipulate her sexual attractiveness in order to maximize her chances for obtaining that commitment. However, sexual rewards, if granted too liberally (to too many boys), or too early in the relationship (first date) will depreciate their value for the male, since they are achieved too easily and are only



highly rewarding if the male believes them to be "a challenge to conquer", and, moreover, exclusive to himself.

The basic dilemma is that a woman who freely provides (sexual) evidence of her affection for a man in order to make associating with her more attractive to him thereby depreciates the value of her affection....The willingness to enter into sex relations...entails less of a commitment for a boy than for a girl in our culture, and he can more easily declare his love first, since this too tends to imply less of a commitment for a boy than for a girl.<sup>67</sup>

Women, in striving to achieve the status that is socially approved for them, are handicapped by the attitudes and behavioral patterns surrounding sex, yet are forced to use sex as a major bargaining point since dating is the institutionalized courtship form in this society, and relies heavily on sexual exchange as its currency.

In this pattern of sexual exchange, the male's position of power is enhanced by the existence of the sexual double standard.

...the (sexual) double standard...assigns full responsibility and blame for sexual activity to the female partner. On the other hand, the double standard works to reinforce the traditional male domination in Western society.<sup>68</sup>

Boys' attitudes towards sex tend to be nonmaritally oriented, in which the "emphasis is upon physical satisfaction and the other person involved is relatively unimportant."<sup>69</sup> Girls' attitudes still tend rather to be premaritally oriented; they "accept sex only as a part of continuing, meaningful relationships which they expect to lead to marriage."<sup>70</sup> Boys are encouraged to learn that they are inherently sex-seeking beings, that sexual satisfaction is a primary value in life, and that one should experience satisfaction with as wide a variety of females as possible. All females should be tested for the possibility of sexual acquiescence.

Because of the difference in attitudes towards sex, and because girls are required to make sexual bargaining part of their dating and



courtship behavior, they are susceptible to sexual exploitation. The possibilities are increased through the operation of the romantic love complex, which acts to justify erotic expression, and encourages sexual bargaining as part of courtship behavior. Girls, conditioned against sexual involvement when young, are later faced with the value that sexual expression is acceptable when two people are "in love". Intercourse, usually considered taboo, comes within the latitude of a woman's acceptance, when she is in love.<sup>71</sup> In this case, sex is acceptable because it is the proof of her commitment to a relationship, and usually involves the further expectation, on her part, that the commitment will lead to marriage.

It might be noted at this point that the courtship patterns common in the 1950's and early 1960's, including premarital sexual patterns, have been undergoing some change over the past five years. Bell<sup>72</sup> observes that the change has not been total, but has been one of degree, and that those endorsing the changes are still in the minority, although the minority has increased in size and significance. Hobart<sup>73</sup> notes that there is evidence of a "sexual revolution", indicated by phenomena such as communal living, university student "living arrangements", "groupies", trial marriages, and the diminution of the sexual "double standard". There has been an increase in intercourse experience by young women, especially university students. However, it appears that young women still engage in sexual activities with the expectation, or hope, that such activities will eventually lead to marriage. Hobart states:

It seems clear that at this time in Canada, female respondents are more concerned with courtship interaction in terms of the marriage which may result, while men, at this time are more committed than women to increasing sex permissiveness in courtship interaction.<sup>74</sup>





This attitude towards sex as acceptable as a spontaneous expression of love may work additional hardships on teenage girls and young women. To deliberately decide to engage in intercourse at some time prior to the occasion is unacceptable, hence many girls do not take the precautions of establishing themselves on any effective means of birth control. This attitude is abetted by a sex education for young people that is totally inadequate, because of societal expectations that such information is unnecessary for the unmarried woman since "respectable" girls do not engage in sex. Inevitably, some girls will become pregnant, with the consequent penalty of abortion, unwed "motherhood", or a forced marriage, and social disapproval in any case.

The double standard remains the dominant informal standard in this society. The "sexual revolution" which is allegedly taking place in some segments of society is but an extension of that standard. The male attitude towards sex has not changed — sex is a commodity to be obtained in as large and varied quantities as possible. The sexual revolution has served the function of gaining easier access to the commodity.

In order to bring this about, it is required that women be imbued with new attitudes towards sex, to better accommodate the wishes of the male for satisfaction with no commitments. The first rationalization for sexual permissiveness is directly linked to the earlier values of the romantic love complex — that "total", expressive human relationships are made possible through sexual expression for both men and women. This basically means that a living relationship is set up that is quasi or pseudo-marital, in that the woman provides housekeeping and sexual services, but has none of the legal protections or security of tenure that accompany marriage. To paraphrase one woman's estimate of the arrangement, "Living together in 'free love' is just like marriage, and the



woman is the one who pays for the 'free'."75

The second rationalization for sexual freedom is that sexual experiences are fully justified on the basis of physical pleasure alone. This is the traditional male rationalization for his own behavior — now supposedly covering the female case as well. It is argued that sexual pleasure is the natural right of unmarried females. Not only are women expected to provide sexual satisfaction for men; they are now expected to enjoy it themselves. With the "sexual revolution", women are increasingly under pressure to engage in sex to prove that they are normal and properly adjusted. Physical gratification is fully expected, and if not attained, the woman is the first to wonder what is wrong with her.

The theories of female sexuality now currently popular have been largely devised by men, and based on analogies to their own sexuality. One of Freud's legacies to North American society was his analysis of female sexuality. In the emotionally immature female, sexual satisfaction centers in the clitoris. An emotionally mature woman, having come to terms with her "masculinity complex", would be able to transfer sensation to the vagina and obtain orgasm through heterosexual intercourse. Women who failed to experience vaginal orgasm were labelled as frigid, and marked as in need of psychotherapy for help in overcoming their fixations.

The faulty anatomical basis for Freud's theory has only been recently brought to light by the Masters and Johnson study, Human Sexual Response.76 However, the myth was popularized, and is still widely believed. Women are expected to achieve sexual satisfaction — as it is defined by clinical psychologists and the writers of "marriage manuals". The ability of a woman to achieve orgasm through coitus is taken as the measure of her emotional maturity. If she is frigid, it is her own



problem, the product of her maladjustment and refusal to accept the feminine role — it is definitely not regarded as stemming from a faulty understanding of the physiological basis and cultural conditioning surrounding female sexuality.

The discussions found in the sex manuals of the 50's and 60's are instructive of several basic points regarding the woman and her sexual behavior. Women are encouraged to "surrender" to their male partners, and in this way attain orgasm. If the desired result fails to materialize, it is because the woman has failed to properly act out her part. However, if such a failure occurs, the woman is strongly urged to fake orgasm, so that her male partner will not be disappointed.<sup>77</sup> In this advice is found the basic reason for the emphasis on female satisfaction — it is ego enhancing for the male.

Female orgasm attained through coitus is proof of male virility. For a woman to shatter this illusion through a confession that she has not achieved orgasm, is to invite several penalties. The blame for such failure is immediately placed on her — she is maladjusted, she is frigid, she is unfeminine. She runs the risk of being discarded and replaced by another woman who is "a real woman" (meaning that she makes him feel like "a real man"), or one who perhaps just knows enough to play the game. Because of her socialized need for male approval, because her status comes through her attachment and identification with him, she may well perceive that she has to feign satisfaction "to get the job".

Women are increasingly faced with conflicting expectations concerning their sexuality. In the past, they were under social pressure to retain their chastity to prove their virtue, and to regard sex as a duty. More recently, married women were, and are, paradoxically expected to be warm and responsive sexual partners, after a courtship







situation in which sex was a bargaining point for future security. If sex within marriage continued to be regarded as a duty and not a pleasure, it could be understood as an extension of the bargaining process of courtship. The exchange of sex for security and status also remained a bargaining point within marriage.<sup>78</sup>

Norms continued to dictate limits on the degree to which a married woman could acceptably express a need or desire for sex. According to Wallin and Clark, it is culturally acceptable that the husband have stronger sex needs, or that both partners have equal sex drives, but it is unacceptable for the wife's need for sex to be stronger than that of her husband.<sup>79</sup>

An increasing number of women express the belief that it is their right to engage in sexual behavior with the same degree of freedom as men. It might be asked if, in fact, the "sexually liberated" woman does have sexual freedom equal to that of men. It would seem that she does not, because she is penalized for her sexual behavior in ways that men are not. Acceptance of the argument that a "total, honest human relationship" requires the "communication" that only sex can provide, often means acquiring the duties of a wife in a "free love" living arrangement, while the male partner has no concomitant responsibilities. Since she is likely to be poorly informed concerning her own sexual functioning and needs, except as they are defined by men, she is also likely to achieve less than total physical satisfaction, should she adopt the attitude that intercourse is justifiable simply in terms of physical pleasure. In the context of the "sexual revolution", the primary reward of sex outside of marriage is to confer status on the "liberated" woman, a status which is influenced by the status of the man or men with whom she has slept or is sleeping.



Women's ignorance concerning their own sexual nature is deeply influenced by the socialization process which young girls undergo, a process which makes it difficult for them to achieve a physical adjustment even when it is expected in their sexual career. Girls are not encouraged to regard themselves as having imperative physical needs which must be satisfied. Although they are encouraged to regard themselves as "sexy", by their peer group and the mass media, their sexuality is defined primarily in terms of their ability to be sexually attractive to males. Their physical appearance, dress, and behavior are calculated to be "sexy" — to attract and excite males. They learn to cultivate such an image in order to be acceptable to males in a male defined sex-oriented culture. They are primarily viewed and socialized within that context to become "sexual objects" of male gratification, rather than as sexual beings, with needs of their own. Sex, under such conditions, may still be used as a commodity to gain status rewards.<sup>80</sup>

The sexual terminology in this culture is instructive of the attitudes towards women. The terms in everyday usage should require no clarification, but a point could be made about the term "surrender" as it is used so frequently in sex manuals. Surrender implies a response to conquest. Conquest and surrender connote a struggle, an overcoming of resistance by a superior power, defeat and humiliation on the part of the conquered. Perhaps the transformation of these terms into descriptions for a supposedly mutually enjoyable activity owe something to the writings of Freud and followers. This seeming paradox was explained to their satisfaction by the claim that women are inherently masochistic.<sup>81</sup>

It is also interesting to note that women in our culture were only discovered to have sexual "needs" around the same time when it first



became possible for them to vote and achieve some financial independence. A new dependency on man was created, not only for physical security and social definition, but for sexual fulfillment and gratification. If the fulfillment was not forthcoming, the blame lay with the woman. That the faulty theories of Freud continued to be accepted even after the contradictory findings of Kinsey in 1953, showed that female needs were not really the issue, but another mechanism to ensure dependence. The Freudian definitions of female sexuality fitted male needs better. Women accepted the male definitions of themselves, because the penalties for non-acceptance were too high.

A note on sexual aggression. Unlike the situation with some other subordinate groups, the threat of physical coercion is not continually present in the male/female relationship. This is largely because women have been so effectively socialized to accept their position that coercion is usually unnecessary.

Women are not encouraged to overcome their paucity of physical strength by learning some form of self defence, which means that if they are ever placed in physical danger, they will be, for the large part, helpless. They are encouraged instead, to rely on the strength and good intentions of men for their physical safety.

The ultimate coercive tactic used against women is sexual assault, or its threat. However, the societal definition of rape is not that it is any instance of intercourse in which a woman does not want to participate. Instead, the term is applied within quite narrow limits. The legal system's view of rape is not too much different from the view of women as property in Mosaic law. Many women do not report assaults, nor press charges, because of the humiliation involved in testifying in court, and because of the low probability of the conviction of their





assailant. A woman's own evidence is given low credibility. Without the corroborating evidence of other witnesses (!) on her behalf, a man is not likely to be convicted. Further, a rape trial usually involves a character investigation of the woman. If she can be proven to be of good character, i.e. a virgin or a respectable married woman, chances are higher for conviction, since the property rights or potential rights of another man were violated. If there is some doubt as to the woman's good character (past sexual conduct), the defence will try to show that there were mitigating circumstances surrounding the attack, if it could even be called an attack. It becomes the woman's fault for "leading him on."<sup>82</sup>

A note on women's attitudes towards each other. The strong cultural prescription to identify with a male precludes close relationships between women. The power principle of "divide and rule" is relevant to understanding relationships which women have among themselves. Although unmarried girls do tend to form friendship cliques, it is implicitly understood that one's commitment to one's clique-mates is of a lower priority than one's commitment to boys. Girl friends serve the function of insurance as companions in case there is no available date. Since men are the primary determinant of status and identity, other women tend to be viewed as potential competitors for them, an attitude which precludes the formation of close emotional relationships and bonds of loyalty.<sup>83</sup>

Standards of beauty have repercussions for how women view themselves and each other, particularly in assessing one another as competitors for male attention. Men set the standards for female beauty. It is one of the primary criteria for granting women status through proximity -- i.e. women have high status because men find them attractive and therefore



rewarding to associate with. Women are continually judged on the basis of their appearance — their physical attributes, dress, and manners, and are placed on a scale of value according to how closely they approximate the ideal. The result in terms of women's attitudes towards each other is well expressed by one woman's statement:

I pretend not to care how other women look. But at times when I am well dressed and looking pretty good, I have found myself looking down on, or feeling sorry for, a woman who does not conform to the male standard of attractiveness. ...Usually this woman is either deferential or defensive with me; I am the same with a woman who (sic) I feel is more attractive than I.<sup>84</sup>

The cultural beauty standards are heavily reinforced by the mass media, which exploits the image of the beautiful woman to advertise consumer products. There is a huge market in women's clothing and cosmetics, capitalizing on the necessity of women making themselves attractive to men. The self concept of a woman is strongly affected by the degree to which she approaches the ideal of the beauty standard. Two of the most emotionally trying periods of a woman's life are adolescence and the menopause. As teenagers, girls must assess their potential for attracting men in the present and future. As middle-aged women, they must come to terms with the fact that they no longer have any value as objects of sexual attraction.

There is a parallel between the standard of beauty for women, and the standard for blacks before the slogan "Black is beautiful!" became current. To be light skinned with features approaching the Caucasian model was the ideal — the further one's looks diverged from the ideal, the more ugly one was judged, with a corresponding increase in self-hatred and low self esteem.<sup>85</sup>



Women in the Home: Complementarity of Functions

Marital adjustment. Women look upon marriage as a goal because there is no other status available to them with comparable compensations.<sup>86</sup> The highest status available to women, and the only one that is fully legitimated by societal approval, is granted through their performance of the roles of childbearing, childrearing and household management within marriage. Many women are unprepared by their socialization, education, and expectations, to do anything else. The result is that their physical security rests on financial dependence, their emotional security rests on the acceptance and approval of their husbands, and their social status depends upon that of their husbands. Their security is bought at the price of their independence, but their alternatives to marriage are controlled through societal disapproval of unmarried women, and real discrimination in the occupational system.

This dependence means that, within marriage, wives are more likely to make greater adjustments to the status and needs of their husbands than vice versa, since they have a larger stake to maintain in the marriage.<sup>87</sup> Leslie cites a study by Luckey which showed that marital satisfaction is related to the wife's accurate perception of her husband's self concept, but that satisfaction is not related to the accuracy of the husband's perception of his wife's self concept.

She suggests that this difference between the sexes may reflect the fact that wives are required to make the greater adjustment in marriage. Her findings are in accord with the widely accepted generalization that subordinate persons and groups tend to be more insightful than those who are able to control through the open use of power.<sup>88</sup>

Bernard notes that women prefer an "interactive pattern" of marital relationship involving friendship between the spouses, while men prefer a "traditional pattern" of separation of male and female roles





into complementary, parallel activities. According to Bernard, "The significance of these sex differences in preferred pattern of marital relationship is that they greatly influence the strategic 'chips' each spouse has in the adjustment processes. The husband is at a strategic advantage."<sup>89</sup> A wife cannot force her husband to reciprocate her desire for expressive affection. Although her husband may not believe that affection is important, she does share with him the cultural value that separate parental and work roles are important. Therefore, it becomes "easier" for her to follow her husband's definition of the relationship than vice versa.

Bernard also notes that the cost to wives of such adjustment may be high. They are more psychologically vulnerable than their husbands to conflict generated within the relationship because of their greater emotional dependence on it. This vulnerability may explain studies which show that married women tend more often to mental illness than do single women.<sup>90</sup>

Parsons, in his analysis of the American (middle class) family, assigned the "instrumental" function to the husband-father, and the "expressive" function to the wife-mother. These complementary functions served to integrate the family internally and with the larger social system, particularly with the occupational system. "The status of the family in American society is overwhelmingly bound up with the occupation of the husband through the income, prestige, and style of life which derive from it."<sup>91</sup> Occupational and familial roles are segregated, but it is understood that the major commitment of the male is to his job. The emotional attraction between spouses, established through the pattern of romantic love in mate selection, ensures their loyalty to each other and helps act as a moderating influence in disputes. The structural



isolation of the nuclear family makes such strong emotional attraction the necessary motivating force drawing two people into a marriage and keeping them committed to it.

In functional terms, the structure of our family system is such as to favor a breaking of family ties at any point where the continuance of those ties would prejudice participation in the occupational system.<sup>92</sup>

...So long as...the marital relationship supports the husband in his job, the couple remain 'in love'. If, however, the wife competes unduly with her husband or if the values, attitudes, social graces, and so on, of the husband and wife do not develop apace, the couple 'fall out of love'.<sup>93</sup>

Divorce is seen as a "means of adjusting family roles to meet the requirements of the occupational structure."<sup>94</sup> Since the important variables to consider are the male and his relationship to the occupational structure, it would appear that the needs of the woman involved are secondary.

Divorce presents several penalties to a woman.<sup>95</sup> An unmarried woman is not part of a couple in a couple-oriented society. She is much less acceptable socially than is an unattached male. Often she has no particular job skills, or low grade ones, because she was encouraged to marry rather than get an education. She has no real motivation or "psychological training" to work, and may be fearful of her own inadequacy and inability to meet the responsibilities of the unknown work world. If there are children, there is guilt over "depriving" them of a stable, two-parent home environment, and worry over continued child maintenance payments by the ex-husband. Ultimately, "Divorce means you have to put yourself back on the marketplace again, to fix yourself up to catch another husband. Divorce means nobody wants you."<sup>96</sup>

With divorce, it is commonly charged that men are discriminated against because they must pay alimony and maintenance. Divorces involving working class people often stem from desertion, and the husband is



incapable of paying alimony and maintenance because of his own low earning capacity. Discrimination can only be properly charged if the wife is capable of earning the same amount of money as her husband. Most women are not. They are encouraged to prepare for marriage rather than a career; they are encouraged not to work outside the home, but to devote themselves to their husbands and children; if they do work, they are often discriminated against because of their sex.

Similar charges are made that wives almost invariably get custody of the children when a divorce occurs. If the norm is that women perform all child care services, it is only a logical extension that the children be awarded to them since the father usually cannot and/or will not provide these services himself. For the lower class divorced or deserted woman who must either work at a low paying job or go on welfare to support herself and her children, this sole responsibility for their care is a heavy burden.

Childbearing and Childrearing. The role of mother is one which receives high societal approval for women, and motherhood has been traditionally considered women's primary responsibility.

Women are popularly credited with having "instinctive" maternal inclinations. Childbearing is regarded as the ultimately creative act which a woman can perform — also, it may be noted, a strictly biological act. Women are often told that they do not need to create through their intellectual capacities, since they can naturally create a child; or they are told that women are incapable of creating anything except children — and the scarcity of female geniuses and "great women" is pointed to as confirmation. There is no recognition of the fact that "great men" have often had the free time to pursue their activities because their





more basic needs were being cared for by female maintenance workers.

Similarly, childrearing is regarded as essential for the wellbeing and fulfillment of women. The child is a preoccupation with the woman in the nuclear family unit. The norms are such that the mother is expected to provide the physical care for her children, plus attempt to be a major agent of socialization. These functions are especially stressed as indispensable for the proper development of the child before school age, but remain of primary importance right through adolescence.

Particularly in the middle class, there is pressure on the mother to "create" a properly socialized child, and therefore on the child to be a malleable product. The overprotective, domineering mother figure of the popular literature is the product of a system which makes childrearing the only productive job that it is acceptable for a woman to perform. The accomplishments of the child reflect the successful child training techniques of the mother, hence love becomes a reward for good performance. The behavioral problems of lower class children are often attributed to the lack of proper middle class "mothering", especially if the mother must leave home to work.

The childrearing patterns of the nuclear family leave the mother isolated from meaningful contact with other adults, contact which is needed for her own intellectual development and emotional well-being. Although the number of children per family has been significantly reduced in recent decades, the emphasis on the mother for intensive and extensive care and socialization has, if anything, increased. Childrearing is largely a solitary activity. There is no extended kin network or village community of women to share child care responsibilities, provide advice, and give each other emotional support. The advice of other women is often interpreted as interference, and young mothers instead tend to



rely heavily on the written advice of child care "experts" whose notions of proper childrearing shift with each new finding in psychology.

The insistence that the mother assume sole responsibility for her child's training ignores the distinction between the biological fact of childbearing and the social fact of childrearing. Child development requires stable relationships with adults, but may be adequately carried out by a mother substitute (male or female), or by several adults, without the disadvantages to both woman and child of exclusive dependence and attachment to the biological mother.<sup>97</sup>

Philip Slater discusses the physical and emotional isolation from contact with other adults which middle class women undergo in this society.

Child-rearing is not a full-time job at any age in and of itself....In every other society throughout history women have been busy with other tasks, and reared their children as a kind of parallel activity....In Moslem society, for example, the wife may be a prisoner, but she is at least not in solitary confinement. In our society the housewife may move about freely, but since she has nowhere to go and is not a part of anything anyway, her prison needs no walls.<sup>98</sup>

This isolation will tend to intensify with age, since the average woman's years of childbearing and childrearing have been greatly reduced in relation to her total life span. The menopause often becomes an identity crisis in our society because it signals the end of the period in which children may be borne, and leaves a woman with the prospect of living 20 to 30 more years with no role which society defines as useful or desirable.

As the Royal Commission Report points out, poor women face special problems as mothers.

The daughters of the poor drop out of school earlier, marry earlier, have more children and, more often than middle class girls, are deserted by their husbands and left without support.<sup>99</sup>



Poor women have inadequate access to effective birth control education and devices,<sup>100</sup> hence have more children than middle class women, but have fewer of the material resources to care for them properly. They are often likely to be the heads of households<sup>101</sup>, meaning that the full responsibility of caring for dependent children falls on them, without even the financial support of a man. As a consequence, they must seek work at low paying jobs<sup>102</sup>, or apply for public assistance.<sup>103</sup> Women with dependent children form a large proportion of people on welfare.<sup>104</sup>

Domestic service. "Being female uniquely qualifies an individual for domestic work."<sup>105</sup> Women are inculcated with the notion that the role of "homemaker" is complementary and equal to that of the breadwinner. It is often spoken of as though it were a career.

One characteristic of this career is that the tasks involved are virtually the same no matter what the interests, education, or capabilities of the individual woman performing them. Although women (particularly middle class women) are socialized to believe that housework is creative and fulfilling, the truth is that the bulk of it is repetitious, monotonous, and hard. It is estimated that one-third of the housewife's time is spent cleaning, cooking, and washing dishes.<sup>106</sup> The housewife is cook, laundress, chambermaid, babysitter, and emergency nurse for the family. She is never really "off-duty" but is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Even when the family is on holiday, her responsibilities often remain unchanged. With pregnancy, her work load is not usually lightened, especially if there are already other children.

A 1967 study found that housewives with no outside employment work daily from 6 hours when there are no children, up to 11 or more hours when there are two or more children. When the wife has full time





outside employment, she will work 4 hours per day in the home as well.<sup>107</sup> The Royal Commission Report points out that the increased efficiency of modern equipment makes it possible to do more work in the same amount of time, or as Betty Friedan puts it, "Every labour-saving appliance brings a labour-demanding elaboration of housework."<sup>108</sup> As well, although many mechanical aids for doing housework are available, the housewife is also the only worker in the home, and must co-ordinate her schedule to those of the many agencies outside the home on which she depends for supplies and services.

The nuclear family is an economic unit, not only of consumption, but of production. As stated by the Royal Commission Report, more goods and services are produced without pay in the home than anywhere else, and most of this production is carried out by women. Over one-half of the adult female population, comparable to 45% of the paid labour force, is employed full time in the care of their families and homes.<sup>109</sup> Women also perform the bulk of unpaid volunteer labour, labour which is regarded as permissible for women as their "cultural" or "charitable" activity. None of this work is judged as economically productive by such measurements as the Gross National Product.

So long as most unpaid work is performed by women, their status will largely be determined by the economic importance which society attaches to such work. The status of the individual in our society depends to a great extent upon his relationship to the labour market. Hence, work in the home is accorded low status since it is unpaid and family centered. It might be noted that domestic work, when it is paid work, is one of the lowest paid, most menial positions available. It is usually performed by women.



The functions of a housewife, however, are not even viewed as an occupation. Women are continually asked, "Do you work or are you a housewife?" Husbands themselves sometimes show by their comments that they really consider their wives parasites, living in leisure while they work to support them. When asked how they would like to reverse occupational roles, the answer is given (amid general laughter), "Sure, I'd like to sit at home all day and watch T.V., and have my wife support me." Men themselves do not want to do housework or care for children, yet women who wish to do anything else may be accused of being "unnatural". Men understand the real value society attaches to housework — as shown when both husband and wife work for pay. They will usually balk at sharing household tasks on an equal basis, so that the wife holds down two jobs, but is paid for one.

Women who work in the home full time are usually totally dependent upon their husbands for financial support. The husband, having the economic power, also holds the major decision making power. This financial dependence is one of the chief factors in keeping women in their present position. They perform essential services in the household for which men would pay in time, money and inconvenience if they were not there to do them. By their labour, their husbands are freed to pursue their work in areas which are paid.

Men sometimes complain that women see their husbands as nothing more than pay cheques or meal tickets. This attitude of women, when it occurs, is a direct consequence of economic dependence — of being forced to ask for money for all necessities. The money available to the housewife depends entirely on her husband's beliefs about sharing his financial rewards with her. Although she has the legal right to maintenance, the amount of maintenance is never set by legal contract except in cases of



desertion or separation. A wife has no legal rights to the salary or property of her husband, even though her labour contributed to his ability to accumulate them. The norms of romantic love, based on the notions of mutual trust as to the good will and generosity of both partners, precludes the drawing up of a marriage contract which will protect the wife against breaches of those norms, in instances where the husband, within his legal rights, may say, "I earned the money. I'll spend it the way I want."

### The Woman and Paid Employment

Women represent 32.2% of the paid labour force in Canada,<sup>110</sup> but receive approximately 20% of all the income reported in Canada.<sup>111</sup> Women do not have job opportunities equal to men, nor do they receive equal pay for equal work. They are confined to jobs traditionally considered "female", and, if professionals, are rarely promoted to the top positions in their fields. Because they are encouraged or forced to take part time work, they often do not get the fringe benefits that full time workers do.

Women form a pool of cheap labour which is used when there is a shortage of male labour, and is forced off the market when there is a surplus of male labour. The Royal Commission Report states that during the Depression, there were restrictions placed upon the employment of married women. During World War II, women were encouraged to work — at jobs traditionally defined as "men's work", and given the incentives of part time work, flexible hours, and day care centers. After the war, some organizations, including the Federal Public Service, restricted the employment of married women to help re-establish servicemen in civilian life.<sup>112</sup> Basically, the same trends were followed as with regard to





black labour in the United States in this period. With the 1971 slump in the job market, blacks are finding it easier than women to get jobs. Men are also taking over jobs traditionally considered female, such as teacher, social worker, bank teller, and telephone operator.<sup>113</sup>

The socialization of women to be secondary is reflected in their concentration in employment areas where their jobs are extensions of their subordinate role, where they perform supportive and serving tasks rather than tasks of central importance. This is partly a result of directly discriminatory practices against women in the labour force, but is buttressed by the attitudes which women have towards themselves and their role in society. Many girls are not encouraged to enter occupations requiring a great deal of training, responsibility, and commitment, but to enter an easily accessible occupation as a stop-gap before marriage. Also as a function of their socialization, many women simply lack the qualities of aggressiveness and competition that are required to handle the responsible jobs which carry high prestige, high pay, and promotional opportunities as rewards.

Married women are particularly encouraged to see their own occupations as secondary to their husbands'. Although 55.8% of the women in the Canadian labour force are married,<sup>114</sup> the normative expectation is that of the functional ideal stated by Parsons:

Normally, only one member of the family — the husband and father — plays a fully competitive role in the occupational system. Such a situation is required in order to protect the marriage relationship, which rests solely on the continuance of romantic love, against the destructive competition which might result if the wife followed an occupation with the same vigor as her husband....Most women work at lower paid, even temporary jobs and clearly subordinate their own occupational ambitions to those of their husbands.<sup>115</sup>

Parsons' statement is an accurate reflection of the existing cultural values and expectations concerning the working patterns of married



women. However, these values may be analysed in terms of what they reveal concerning the distribution of power within the male/female relationship. For example, one wonders why "romantic love" would be destroyed if the wife established some financial and emotional independence through a job of her own, unless the basis of such love rested on her dependence (subordination). One might wonder why a job need result in "competition", unless the husband finds it necessary to enhance his own status by acting out a paternalistic role towards a subordinate woman who is incapable of competition since she is totally dependent on him for her security. What is "destructive" about a job, unless it destroys the domination of the husband's economic control, his monopoly on defining his wife's status according to his own, and her emotional dependence on him as her only significant contact with the outside, adult world. The function of such an arrangement would appear to be to mask paternalism under the guise of chivalry and the preservation of romantic "love". An underlying function of the values for society noted in Parsons' statement, is to rationalize and to help maintain the system of dominance/subordination in the sex role relationship.

Leslie feels that the wife is more likely to work during the early years of marriage, before the birth of children, for the following reasons:

The partner aspects of the role may be less threatening to the husband than they would be at other times in the marriage because they are defined as temporary and because they permit the husband apparently to live up to his equalitarian ideals....The wife's income, or a large portion of it, may be saved while the husband's income is used for living expenses, and neither spouse conceives of the wife as a breadwinner.<sup>116</sup>

However:

Young women...may occasionally assert themselves against their husbands' control of all of the family income. Even if the wife is careful to avoid this, any feelings of personal



inadequacy that the husband has may be aggravated by the pay check which she brings home every week.<sup>117</sup>

Her economic independence, in this case, becomes more illusion than fact, foregone in the necessity to maintain the dominance of the husband, so that his self concept will not be injured by her attempt to gain equality.<sup>118</sup> Conflict tends to be more overt in the working class rather than the middle class family when the wife works.<sup>119</sup> Her work is not as easily labelled as supplementary, since the money she brings in is necessary to the maintenance of the family unit. She is more likely to work on a permanent basis, and to control her income. At the same time, conflict can result because both she and her husband believe in the norm that says that a man should support his family. For the man, the way out of such a situation may be desertion.

Married women face other conditions which prevent them from the independence which could be established through paid work. With their first pregnancy, they are likely to quit work. Besides the cultural proscriptions against women with young children working for pay, many jobs do not have adequate maternity leave benefits. The terms of maternity protection vary widely, but women rarely receive their salaries for all or even part of their time of maternity absence. Some employers simply require a woman to quit her job when her pregnancy becomes obvious.

The career of many married women on the labour market is sporadic to a large extent because they leave paid work to raise their families. Many women enter the labour force intermittently between the births of their children, or permanently when their youngest child has entered school. This of course ensures that they will not achieve the security of seniority, nor be granted promotions. For the 40 year old woman





returning to paid labour, her job skills are often obsolete or unpracticed, also making it probable that she will get a low paying job.

The strong prejudices against the paid employment of mothers of young children are responsible for the failure to establish adequate day care centers and nursery schools. Working mothers comprise 24% of the female labour force.<sup>120</sup> One-half of these women have children under the age of six years<sup>121</sup>, making approximately 400,000 children. These are women who must work to support themselves and their children in many cases; who work at low paying clerical, sales, and service positions<sup>122</sup>; and whose median annual wages are \$1,783 when the husband is present, \$2,856 when he is absent.<sup>123</sup> One percent of the children of working mothers under the age of three years are cared for in day nurseries or nursery schools, three percent of the children from three to five years are cared for in such a situation.<sup>124</sup> Most working mothers have no professional child care services at their disposal, but must rely on relatives or paid babysitters to care for their children while at work. The more money the working mother earns, the more she pays for child care.<sup>125</sup>

Because of the prevalent attitudes about child care as the responsibility of the individual mother, without recognition of her labour as an economic activity, there are financial burdens placed on the working mother which are not placed on any other economic unit. At present, wages paid by the working mother for domestic help or child care cannot be deducted from income tax. The services performed by the housewife and mother are unrecognized as an economic contribution. When they must be replaced, that cost is also unrecognized in taxation -- hence the burden of replacing her labour falls entirely on her. Since the family is not regarded as an economically productive unit, the costs of maintaining it are not regarded as legitimate grounds for taxation concessions.



The present attitudes regarding child care as the primary responsibility of the mother discriminates against women in that it assumes fallaciously that all women wish to and are capable of performing child care services as their "career". Structural conditions such as lack of external child care facilities make it difficult for a woman to have any viable alternative which does not put her at a disadvantage.

Although there is a strong popular opinion that their mothers' working is damaging to children, the summary by Hoffman of the research done on the effects of mothers' employment on children, showed that research does not support the assumption of differences in adjustment between the children of working and non-working mothers.<sup>126</sup> The studies summarized had imposed controls by social class, by full time versus part time employment, by age of child, and by mother's attitude towards employment.

With regard to distribution into job categories, women are channelled primarily into service and clerical areas. Table I shows the percentage of women workers in selected occupational groupings for the year 1969 in Canada. It might be noted that, although they fill 42% of the "professional and technical" job category, they are concentrated in those positions carrying lower monetary and status rewards compared to those occupations primarily held by men. Women are not usually doctors, but nurses; not dentists, but dental technicians; not lawyers, but social workers; not engineers, but dieticians; not architects, but librarians; not business administrators, but home economists; not college professors, but elementary school teachers. These jobs are all extensions in some form of the female role.

Women, even in the same job category as men, do not receive equal pay for equal work. Table II gives a sample of job categories comparing



TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WORKERS OUT OF ALL WORKERS IN  
SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS, 1969

Occupational grouping	Percentage of women workers
All occupational groupings	32.2
Managerial	12.2
Professional and technical	42.0
Clerical	69.8
Sales	38.7
Service and recreation	59.8
Communication	52.4
Craft, production and related workers	14.2
Labourers and unskilled workers	6.6

SOURCE: Women's Bureau, Canada Department of Labour, Facts and Figures: Women in the Labour Force, 1969 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970), Table 11, page 15.

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF MEDIAN MONTHLY SALARY AND WAGE RATES FOR MALE  
AND FEMALE WORKERS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, ALBERTA 1970

Occupation	Male salary or wage rate	Female salary or wage rate
Librarian	\$751	\$715
Tailor	500	325
Chef	573	425
Photoprinter	582	360
Janitor	449	355
Light truck driver	482	295
Physiotherapist	640	565
Keypunch operator	565	388
Personnel officer	760	597

SOURCE: Fourteenth Annual Report: Alberta Salary and Wage Rate Survey, 1 August 1970 (Edmonton: Alberta Bureau of Statistics, Department of Industry and Tourism, December 1, 1970).





pay for male and female workers performing the same job. The statistics are for the province of Alberta, but additional statistics are available on the national scale in annual reports of Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour.<sup>127</sup>

Women are also at a disadvantage in entering employment. Many firms specify sex preferences or requirements when interviewing and hiring, and advertising acts as a filtering device segregating male and female jobs even before the interview stage. If the job is considered male, or if both men and women work in it, men are usually hired in preference to women. The reason given may be that men are more responsible, are less likely to miss work<sup>128</sup>, or that they will not leave work to get married or have a baby. Married women encounter particularly strong obstacles to entering employment, among them the prejudices of employers who feel that "married women have husbands to support them so they have no business working." Such blanket statements ignore the probability that a married woman who is seeking a job is doing so because of financial need.<sup>129</sup>

Occupational choice is often restricted by traditional attitudes about the kind of work women can do or should do. Most occupations are sex typed, and relatively few are considered suitable for women, including managerial positions, the higher paid professions, and the skilled trades. Men, as a group, have a much wider range of alternatives open to them than do women. Of 96 occupations listed in Section 1 of the Alberta Salary and Wage Rate Survey, 61 positions were filled by men only; 24 positions by females only; and 11 positions had both males and females, of which 8 were predominantly female, and 3 were predominantly male.<sup>130</sup>



Men, as a group, have a greater chance than women to occupy the positions in society which give power, independence of action, and control over institutions and resources. The argument that men are discriminated against because of the prescription of their role to work for pay, and that their work is often alienating and meaningless, ignores the fact that, in this society, the major determinant of status is one's occupation. This status is largely a male monopoly however, since women who work are likely to be subject to disapproval, especially if they regard their jobs as of primary importance and take them with the same seriousness as men.

A tactic recently used by some opponents of economic equality for women was to point to the Soviet Union as an example where women have equality, and as a result may work at such jobs as ditchdigging and garbage collecting. If women admit that they would not like to do these jobs, it is taken as evidence that they really do not merit equality since they do not want equal "responsibility". The chances are good that, if asked, male ditchdiggers and garbage collectors in this society would admit that they would prefer cleaner, better paid jobs, but that they do not work at these particular jobs out of choice, but out of economic necessity. These are "dirty" jobs, but so is the job of scrubwoman, or the female migrant farm labourer. A large proportion of Canada's poor are women, who are kept out of several male dominated unskilled occupations on the convenient rationalization that the jobs are dirty or call for physical strength. As an argument, it both discriminates against women, and serves the function of frightening middle class women away from demanding job equality, and is therefore a good mechanism of control.

Nineteen percent of all women workers in Canada are unionized.<sup>131</sup> They also comprise 20.4 percent of all union members in Canada. Very



few collective agreements have a clause stipulating equal pay for male and female workers.<sup>133</sup> Women are excluded from most strong craft and trade unions which can bargain successfully for high wages and fringe benefits.<sup>134</sup> Clerical and service occupations have a surplus of labour, making it easy for employers to pay low rates and replace workers who attempt to organize. Women themselves are often unfamiliar with labour organizing tactics, and may not even be aware of the meaning of unionization. Also, the organized union structure rarely makes overtures to unionize occupations which are female or predominantly female. In unions such as C.U.P.E., teachers' and civil servants' unions, the organizing impetus has come from the men in the field, not the women.

The fact that many women work part time also makes it practically impossible to unionize them. It is easier for employers to profit from the use of part time female labour, because they are not eligible for fringe benefits such as pension plans, and can never achieve the security of seniority. Temporary workers can be taken or let go at the convenience of the employer according to fluctuations in the economy. Part time work is often viewed as an advantage to women since they can work for pay, and still maintain their family responsibilities. For the part time clerical or service worker, who often has no access to child care facilities, yet who must work out of economic necessity, part time work promises a minimum of wages with no security, or in other words, guaranteed poverty.

Protective legislation for women has sometimes had the consequence of restricting their job opportunities.<sup>135</sup> It has permitted employers to refuse to hire women because of special provisions regarding maximum working hours, limitations on weights to be lifted or carried, and provision of transportation on night shifts. These same legal protections may be the excuse to pay women lower wages than men doing the same job.<sup>136</sup>







Women rarely achieve the highest management positions, even in jobs which are considered "female". For example, in Alberta in 1966, a male teacher, while 2.5 times as likely to have higher qualifications than a woman, was 7.5 times as likely to become a school principal.<sup>137</sup> Other "female" professions, such as social work and library science, are becoming increasingly attractive to men, whose chances of gaining supervisory positions are higher than those of women.

Inadequate education is a deterrent to promotion, but it is often a function of the counter expectations placed on girls. Lack of experience is another deterrent, but often results when employers refuse to hire and train women because of their sex; and because of the enforced sporadic job history of many women.

Women are accused of having a high turnover rate, which may be partly explained through their awareness of their own lack of opportunity and a consequent refusal to become committed to a dead-end job. Women are also not as freely geographically mobile as men, if married. Because of the cultural expectations as expressed through the laws of domicile, wives move with their husbands. A man may take the best job available to him anywhere; a woman may take the best job available to her near her husband's place of work. For this reason, employers may hesitate to train women for upper echelon positions. To argue that if a woman expects to have a career she should not marry, is to penalize women in a way that men never are.

Some employers claim that neither women nor men will accept a woman as supervisor. This attitude rests on the value that men possess authority by virtue of their sex, that women are naturally the recipients of orders, as men are the givers. The difference in status between men and women makes it acceptable for a man to hold a position of authority



over a woman, but not the reverse. Men are quite likely not to cooperate with a female supervisor, for that very reason. Women, on the other hand, are used to seeing men as authority figures, but tend to represent the authority of another woman.

The issues discussed above show that women are in a "double bind" situation; that the attitudes, expectations, and structural conditions facing a woman seeking employment make it highly probable that she will be prone to one or more of the disabilities that employers can then use against her as a reason not to hire or promote her, while saying that "women discriminate against themselves".

Women, despite their individual capabilities and liabilities, tend to be discriminated against in employment because they are members of a group. The evidence presented by women who do manage to be "successful" in a paid occupation, is to the effect that,

To succeed in a man's world, be twice as good and twice as modest; if you succeed, it's because you're aggressive, competitive, unfeminine and unnatural; if you don't succeed, you're obviously not good enough.<sup>138</sup>

Or,

...the principal difficulty encountered by women in...society will remain as it was described by Mrs. Virginia Rogers, acting dean of students at Indiana University: 'Women don't have wives'.<sup>139</sup>

### III. CONFLICTING EXPECTATIONS IN THE FEMALE ROLE

The usual response by women to their subordinate position has been and continues to be that of acceptance. This response has been based on the perception by women that the system of role relationships in which they interacted with men was legitimate. The expectations of both men and women regarding their respective roles were congruent with each other,



and supported by a social structure which permitted the confirmation of these expectations.

However, that social structure has undergone rapid changes in the last several decades, resulting in new expectations for women. At the same time, many of the old attitudes and expectations regarding women's roles have remained in force, still to be inculcated through socialization. As a result, women now find themselves in a position where they are faced with many conflicting expectations and situations. Like the role of blacks, women's role is in flux, presenting them with role expectations which are complex, confusing, and often contradictory, and for which they have no strong structural support. Under these circumstances, some women are coming to question the legitimacy of the role relationship, since both structure and expectations offer them no security.

Dager<sup>140</sup> points out that girls are faced with contradictory expectations from the formal educational system as opposed to the traditional socialization patterns for girls. The role that they are still being socialized to fit is no longer appropriate for the conditions in which they will live. With regard to the female child,

Her close identification with the mother would be more appropriate to an earlier time when there was greater institutional and kinship support for women, particularly in helping her to become placed in marriage. Today, she is practically on her own in getting married or selecting an occupation or both. She is attaining independence increasingly, but as yet does not have the prerogative of 'choosing' her spouse and only limited access to the more prestigious occupations. Thus, her identification with a mother does not provide her with the means to compete in the outside world.<sup>141</sup>

She experiences role conflict between the wife-mother role that she recognizes has a low but legitimate status; and the expectations of the educational system, which is geared to broaden the outlook beyond the home, and to train people for careers in the occupational system.<sup>142</sup>





Women are channelled into certain areas in the educational system, and they face sex typing even in university courses, such as the reinforcement of socialization patterns taught in psychology, and the "functional" male and female roles of family sociology. However, the opportunities to obtain new perspectives and professional job training are greater than in earlier generations, and have their effect on women in the educational system. Some women do opt for a career, only to face conflicts over keeping up marital and childrearing responsibilities as careers of equal importance. Some try to work and maintain a family at the same time, others try to split their working life into two parts, one before the children are born, and one after they have been socialized adequately. Increasingly larger numbers of women are being affected by work experience, either through intermittent or permanent entrance into the labour market.

However, most occupations open to women are of low prestige, and women still face cultural disapproval if they are career oriented. They may themselves face problems of anxiety over whether they are "depriving" their husbands and children by working. At the same time, they may want to be intellectually and economically productive in their own right. Faced with no firm structural support for either role, the young woman may well be left with a sense of ambiguity, and consequent difficulties in identity formation.

The important thing to note is that the female cannot commit herself without possible deleterious consequences for her life pattern. Thus, the pattern of early marriages would insure the female (and male) an established place (status) in society. There still remains a fairly clear wife-mother role and, rather than face the ambiguities of the social system, many young girls jump at the chance to get married.<sup>143</sup>

Kirkpatrick<sup>144</sup> specifies three possible roles for married women. The wife-mother role requires the wife to devote herself to household management and childrearing, and to yield her own interests to those of her



husband, especially with reference to the requirements of his job. In return, she is rewarded with security, "affection and respect". The companion role emphasizes the wife's obligations to be a stimulating intellectual companion and a sexually attractive object. She has,

...as a primary responsibility, the cultivation of social contacts advantageous to her husband. She receives a maximum of chivalrous attention but her security depends upon her maintaining her attractiveness and upon the social, personal, and sexual gratification she provides to her husband.<sup>145</sup>

A newer, third role, is that of partner. The wife works, is financially independent, and as a consequence is supposed to have equal authority within the home, and is not bound to do domestic services for her husband. However, as discussed earlier<sup>146</sup>, her independence and equality are often spurious, for she must still support the cultural value that her husband is the head of the household, and must avoid any behavior which might "compete" or be threatening to his position and self-image. She is, in reality, a pseudo-equal, for her role primarily serves to gratify her husband's wish "apparently to live up to his equalitarian ideals", while actually maintaining the real power.

Leslie feels that women might play two or more of these roles during their married life, according to the needs of their husbands at various times in their careers. A young man, not yet established in an occupation, perhaps a student, might welcome a "partner" who can bring him economic and ego rewards that make him feel that he is truly liberal. At the stage when he is settled in a career, he may prefer that his wife follow the more traditional role expectations, to devote herself full-time to producing and raising children, and providing him with a pleasant home environment. If she drops out of the labour market to fulfill these expectations, it also effectively establishes her financial dependence on



him. Women are increasingly encouraged to be attractive, stimulating companions to their husbands at all times. Hence it also becomes their responsibility to cultivate their minds and bodies to the advantage of their husbands, realizing, increasingly so as they age, that they are in competition with younger and more attractive women for his attention. Thus, instead of being expected to play one major role, married women are faced with the complexities of three, which they may be required to play in sequence or simultaneously. Each role, however, is based primarily on the needs of the husband; none are stable, and none are secure. Of course, the lower the socio-economic status of a woman, the less likely she will be able to conform to any of these middle class models, although she may subscribe to that of the wife-mother.

Jessie Bernard<sup>147</sup> feels that women are becoming "technologically underemployed". Their traditional occupations, those of childbearing, childrearing, and household management, are being rendered obsolete. In this case, the social structure has changed tremendously, but the traditional expectations for women remain much the same. Technology has made it possible to reduce housework to a minimum, yet, "Housewifery expands to fill the time available".<sup>148</sup> Women no longer need to be tied constantly to children through pregnancy and lactation. The years of childbearing are contracting even as the total lifespan of women is expanding.<sup>149</sup> Women are expected to devote much more of their time to rearing fewer children. Yet, as noted earlier<sup>150</sup>, women are not "naturally" equipped to be a socializing agent, and failing the support of an extended kin group, must rely on the advice of child care experts. Also, children are in fact moving out of the family environment at an increasingly early age, and are influenced by other primary sources of socialization such as school, peer groups, and the mass media. The societal expectation





that a mother has the primary responsibility, and innate know-how, to care for and train the child, is somewhat unrealistic. However, despite the fact that their traditional functions have been substantially altered and reduced through the increasing growth of other agencies, women are still expected to regard them as primary occupations.<sup>151</sup>

Finally, women face increasingly complex demands with regard to their sexuality. They face almost total responsibility for contraceptive measures,<sup>152</sup> and are now faced with open conflict over the use of abortion as a contraceptive technique as well. Young unmarried women are particularly under increasing pressure to engage in extramarital sex, a freedom which is often only freedom to be exploited casually. The issue is complicated by faulty theories of female sexuality, and a real lack of understanding of women's sexual needs and capacities, by both men and women. These young women still face the disapproval of their elders.

Given these conditions, it might be expected that women begin to question which, if any, of their conflicting role expectations are legitimate. The women most likely to challenge these role expectations are also likely to be those who are faced with the most contradictions. They are most likely to be those women who, now and in the immediate future, are exposed most strongly to the structural changes and inconsistent societal expectations regarding the role of women. They are also likely to be women who can most afford (in power terms) to challenge the legitimacy of the existing relationship between men and women — i.e. they are in positions where attempts to control their action alternatives by imposing penalties for noncompliance are least likely to be effective.

In the remaining chapters, Women's Liberation will be discussed as a movement which has arisen as a response by a segment of the female population to their perception that the role of women in this society



must be redefined and clarified.

The data concerning the movement was gathered principally through a participant observation study of a Women's Liberation organization in Edmonton, Alberta. The next chapter will indicate the reasons for the use of participant observation in the study, and will discuss the perspectives and problems involved in the use of this method.



Footnotes: Chapter II

1. Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1964), p. 265.
2. Helen M. Hacker, "Women as a Minority Group", Social Forces, 30 (October, 1951), pp. 60-69.
3. Ibid., p. 65.
4. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Employment, Income, and the Ordeal of the Negro Family", The Negro American, eds. Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965), pp. 134-159.

c.f. Lee Rainwater, "Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower-Class Family", Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark, op.cit., pp. 160-204.

A comparison of women with other subordinate groups may be profitably supplemented by a comparison, within other subordinate groups, of the relative positions of men and women. For example, black women are discriminated against as blacks, but also specifically as women, and as such, have a status that is even lower than that of black men. They are sexually exploited by both white and black men. The figures cited by Moynihan show that the average wages received by black women are twice as low as those received by black men. However, he blames the underemployment of the black male partly on the overemployment of the black woman. The black woman receives a large share of the blame for the personality "weaknesses" and disorders of the black man. Because she is forced to work, and because she is forced to raise her family alone, she often assumes a "dominant" position in the family. The male, being unable to assume his proper dominant position through keeping his woman dependent on him financially, is often likely to feel inadequate and so desert her. His son, with no proper dominant male role model, is likely to have problems in assuming his masculine identity. Black men themselves have become aware of these analyses, and have consequently begun to blame black women for their "emasculatation", and to demand that they begin to play their proper subordinate role, so that the black man may assert his manhood through dominating them.

c.f. Calvin Hernton, Sex and Racism in America (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

5. Stuart A. Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and John B. Adams, The Family in Various Cultures (Chicago: J.B. Lippincott, 1961).

c.f. Arnold S. Nash, "Ancient Past and Living Present", Family, Marriage, and Parenthood, eds. Howard Becker and Reuben Hill (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1955).

6. Alberta Women's Bureau. Alberta Government, Laws of Interest to Women of Alberta (Edmonton: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 17.
7. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1959), pp. 7-8.





8. Report on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970), pp. 236-237.
9. Ibid., p. 239.
10. See below, discussion of the relationship between working mothers and day care, pp. 72-73.
11. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 38.
12. Ibid., pp. 25-27.
13. Laws of Interest to Women of Alberta, loc.cit.
14. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 251.
15. Ibid., pp. 249-251.
16. Aileen Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.)  
c.f. John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).  
c.f. Eleanor Flexner, passim.  
c.f. For a good summary discussion of the political history of women in Canada, see the Royal Commission Report, Chapter 7, pp. 333-356. The analysis which is presented says, in part:  
  
The last 50 years, since woman suffrage was introduced, have seen no appreciable change in the political activities of women beyond the exercise of the right to vote. In the government and Parliament of Canada, the presence of a mere handful of women is no more than a token acknowledgement of their right to be there. The voice of government is still a man's voice. The formulation of policies affecting the lives of all Canadians is still the prerogative of men. The absurdity of this situation was illustrated when debate in the House of Commons on a change in abortion law was conducted by 263 men and one woman.  
  
No where else in Canadian life is the persistent distinction between male and female roles of more consequence. No country can make a claim to having equal status for its women so long as its government lies entirely in the hands of men. The obstacles to genuine participation, when they lie in prejudice, in unequal family responsibility, or in financing a campaign, must be approached with a genuine determination to change the present imbalance. (p. 355.)
17. Louis Kanowitz, Women and the Law: the Unfinished Revolution (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), p. 37.
18. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 235.



19. Woman's station as an inferior to man was established in the Book of Genesis, and reinforced throughout the rest of the Old and New Testaments. Eve was created from Adam's rib, dependent for her very existence on the prior existence of man, and explicitly created to be his "helpmate". The primal woman was blamed for man's fall from grace — she was the instrument of evil, by which man was tempted and turned aside from obedience to God. As punishment for her sin, she was condemned to eternal servitude to her husband — a rationalization that has been used effectively into the twentieth century. In Hebrew mythology, Adam's first wife was Lilith, created as an independent being, who refused to obey her husband, and was eliminated, to be replaced by the more tractable Eve.

20. H.R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil (London: Putnam, 1964).

21. John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (London: English Scholars' Library of Old and Modern Works, 1878).

22. Kingsley Davis, "Illegitimacy and the Social Structure", Readings in the Family and Society, ed. William J. Goode (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 21-31.

23. See below, discussion of courtship behavior, pp. 49-51.

24. Robert R. Bell, Social Deviance: A Substantive Analysis (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1971).

Bell questions the prevalent assumption found in much of the literature that regards the prostitute as emotionally maladjusted or "sick". He notes that much of the theory concerning the causes of prostitution is speculative rather than resting on empirical data. Freudian theory describes the prostitute as "...masochistic or as having an infantile mentality. She is described as being unable to form mature interpersonal relationships and as being emotionally dangerous to the male." (p. 235) He cites Harold Greenwald, "The Social and Professional Life of the Call Girl", Deviance, eds. S. Dinitz, R.R. Dynes, and A.C. Clarke (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) as presenting an argument that prostitution stems from certain childhood experiences.

Greenwald says that the prostitutes he studied had 'early family experiences of parental conflict, neglect, and rejection. They also had rewarding sexual experiences with older men. These experiences led the girls to see sex as a commodity to barter for personal gain.' (Greenwald, p. 406, as quoted by Bell, p. 235.)

Bell presents an alternative explanation of the reason why women enter prostitution. He cites Paul H. Gebhard, "Misconceptions about Female Prostitutes", Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, March 1969, p. 28, in support of this explanation.

The reasons given by prostitutes for entering that profession have very often been discounted or defined as rationalizations. But it would appear that the insights that prostitutes can give about their own occupational



choice are as important to consider as other interpretations. Most women say they become prostitutes for very practical reasons....Gebhard in his sample found that almost 90 percent of the prostitutes listed money as their prime motivation. (Bell, p. 236)

25. Jean Genet, The Balcony, translated from the French by Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove Press, 1958, rev. ed., 1965).

26. Marie Bonaparte, Female Sexuality (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

cf. Helene Deutsch, The Psychology of Women, a Psychoanalytic Interpretation (New York: Greene and Stratton, 1945), Two Volumes.

cf. Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham, Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1947).

cf. Erik Erikson, "Inner and Outer Space: Reflections on Womanhood", Daedalus, Vol. 93 (Spring, 1964), pp. 582-606.

27. Sigmund Freud, "Femininity", New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis, translated from the German by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), pp. 112-135.

cf. Sigmund Freud, "On the Internalization of the Sex Role: The Feminine Case:", Theories of Society, eds. Talcott Parsons, et.al. (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 852-860.

28. E.H. Schein, J. Scheier, and C.H. Barker, Coercive Persuasion (New York: Norton, 1961).

cf. Bruno Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations", Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, 38 (1943), pp. 417-452.

29. Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, "Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory", Theories of Personality (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1957), pp. 29-75.

30. H.J. Eysenck, "The Effects of Psychotherapy: an Evaluation", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 16 (1952), pp. 319-324.

31. F. Barron and T. Leary, "Changes in Psychoneurotic Patients With and Without Psychotherapy", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 19 (1955), pp. 239-245.

cf. A.E. Bregin, "The Effects of Psychotherapy: Negative Results Revisited", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 10 (1963), pp. 244-250.

cf. R.D. Cartwright and J.L. Vogel, "A Comparison of Changes in Psychoneurotic Patients During Matched Periods of Therapy and No-therapy", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 24 (1962), pp. 121-127.

cf. C.B. Truax, "Effective Ingredients in Psychotherapy: An Approach to Unravelling the Patient-Therapist Interaction", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 10 (1963), pp. 256-263).

32. Margaret Mead, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies (New York: New American Library, 1950).







33. Margaret Mead, "Prehistory and the Woman", Barnard College Bulletin, (April 30, 1969). Cited in Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970), p. 224.

34. Wanda Neff, Victorian Working Women (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929).

cf. Eleanor Flexner, op.cit., pp. 258-259.

35. Dr. Estelle Ramay, "Man: the Weaker Sex. Why Women Are Tougher", Reader's Digest, (April, 1971), p. 114. The statement was made by Dr. Edgar Berman, an American surgeon and former consultant on Latin American health problems.

36. S. Schachter and J.E. Singer, "Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State", Psychological Review, 63 (1962), pp. 379-399.

37. Lionel Tiger, Men In Groups (New York: Random House, 1969).

38. G.D. Mitchell, "Paternalistic Behavior in Primates", Psychological Bulletin, 71 (1969), pp. 399-417.

39. Orville G. Brim, Jr., "Family Structure and Sex-Role Learning by Children", A Modern Introduction to the Family, eds. Norman W. Bell and Ezra F. Vogel (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1960), pp. 482-496.

cf. Arnold W. Greene, "The Middle-Class Male Child and Neurosis", Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 563-572.

cf. Mary E. Giffin, Adelaide M. Johnson, and Edward M. Litin, "The Transmission of Superego Defects in the Family", Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 623-635.

Significantly, many studies of child development appear to deal with female socialization only as an adjunct to the more central area of importance, that of male socialization. There is a great deal of literature written on the difficulties of establishing a masculine identity in the male child. Failure to attain the proper identity is often blamed on: 1) the presence of older sisters from whom younger brothers pick up undesirable feminine characteristics, or 2) the unhealthy relationship (often sexual) between the male child and his mother. A recent article in Chatelaine cited a study which purported to show a relationship between male homosexuality and the presence of an older sister! (May, 1971)

40. Allen D. Grimshaw, "Interpreting Collective Violence: An Argument for the Importance of Social Structure", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 391 (September, 1970), p. 17.

41. John Stuart Mill, op.cit., p. 444.

42. Seymour M. Farber and Roger H.L. Wilson, eds., Man and Civilization: The Potential of Woman (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), p. 101.

43. Boyd R. McCandless, Children and Adolescents: Behavior and Development (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961).



44. Ibid., p. 330.

45. H. Barry III, M.K. Bacon, and I.J. Child, "A Cross-Cultural Survey of Some Sex Differences in Socialization", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 55 (1957), pp. 327-332.

cf. R.R. Sears, E.E. Maccoby, and H. Levin, Patterns of Child Rearing (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1957).

cf. J.W. McDavid, "Imitative Behavior in Preschool Children", Psychological Monographs, 73 (1959), pp. 1-26.

46. Boyd R. McCandless, op.cit., p. 332.

47. Ibid., p. 349.

48. D.G. Brown, "Masculinity-Femininity Development in Children", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21 (1957), pp. 197-202. Cited by Boyd R. McCandless, op.cit., pp. 333-334.

49. W.W. Hartup and Elsie A. Zook, "Sex-Role Preference in Three- and Four-year-old Children", Journal of Consulting Psychology, (1960), in press at time of reference, Boyd R. McCandless, op.cit., p. 334.

50. Edward Z. Dager, "Socialization and Personality Development in the Child", Handbook of Marriage and the Family, ed. Harold T. Christensen (Chicago: Rand McNalley & Co., 1964) pp. 740-781.

51. Ibid., p. 758.

52. Ibid., p. 759.

53. I.K. Broverman, D.M. Broverman, F.E. Clarkson, P. Rosenkrantz, and S.R. Vogel, "Sex Role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgments of Mental Health", Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol. 34, No. 1 (1970), pp. 1-7.

54. Philip Goldberg, "Are Women Prejudiced Against Women?", Transaction, 5 (April, 1968), pp. 28-30.

55. Elizabeth Douvan, "Sex Differences in Adolescent Character Process", Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 6 (1960), pp. 203-211. Cited in Edward Z. Dager, op.cit., p. 759.

56. See below, discussion of marital adjustment, pp. 59-60.

57. Orville G. Brim, Jr., passim.

58. Paul Henry Mussen, John Janeway Conger, and Jerome Kagan, Child Development and Personality, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 505-506.

59. See below, discussion of women in paid employment, p. 68ff.



60. Raymond Breton and John C. McDonald, "Occupational Preferences of Canadian High School Students", Canadian Society: Sociological Perspectives, 3rd ed., eds. Bernard R. Blishen, et.al. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968), pp. 269-298.
61. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., pp. 181-182.
62. Ibid., Chart 2, p. 168.
63. Ibid., p. 173.
64. Ibid., p. 180.
65. Peter M. Blau, Exchange and Power in Social Life (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967).
66. Ibid., pp. 76-85.
67. Ibid., p. 83.
68. Gerald R. Leslie, The Family in Social Context (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 397-398.
69. Ibid., p. 413. Leslie cites Winston W. Ehrmann, Premarital Dating Behavior (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1959), in support of this statement. Ehrmann discovered that:
- ...far more men had had sexual intercourse with friends and acquaintances (56 and 60 percent) than had done so with women they loved (24 percent). When the personal code is considered, the same pattern holds; far more men consider coitus acceptable with friends and acquaintances than with lovers....Thus, men adhere to a far more conservative standard of behavior with women they love than with those whom they do not. Moreover, their actual behavior with women they love is more conservative still. (pp. 394-395, Leslie)
- Women were much more likely to find coitus acceptable only with a lover in a relationship where they felt a personal commitment.
- Ehrmann also found that 30 percent of the males had had their most intimate sexual experience with a member of a status group lower than their own. Leslie mentions that cross class dating often seems to involve sexual exploitation of the lower status women involved.
70. Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., p. 413.
71. Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, "Attitude as the Individual's Own Categories: The Social Judgment-Involvement Approach to Attitude and Attitude Change", Attitude, Ego-Involvement, and Change, eds. Carolyn W. Sherif and Muzafer Sherif (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), pp. 105-139.
72. Robert R. Bell, op.cit., Chapter 2.





73. Charles Hobart, "Changing Orientations to Courtship", Social and Cultural Change in Canada, ed. W.E. Mann (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 272-295.
74. Ibid., p. 292.
75. "Barbarous Rituals", Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 167.
76. W.H. Masters and V.E. Johnson, Human Sexual Response (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966).
77. Marie Robinson, The Power of Sexual Surrender (New York: Doubleday, 1959).
78. Jessie Bernard, "The Adjustment of Married Mates", Harold T. Christensen, op.cit., pp. 719-720.
79. Paul Wallin & Alexander Clark, "Cultural Norms and Husbands' and Wives' Reports of their Marital Partners' Preferred Frequency of Coitus Relative to Their Own", Sociometry, 21 (September, 1958), pp. 247-254. Cited by Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., p. 504.
- cf. Masters and Johnson, passim. In this study, the researchers found that, once women learned how to experience orgasm, they showed a greater orgasmic capacity than did men.
80. Tom Wolfe, "The Life & Hard Times of a Teenage London Society Girl", The Pump House Gang (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), pp. 175-191.
81. Marie Bonaparte, passim.
82. A specific example of this kind of trial was reported in the Edmonton Journal, Tuesday, May 27, 1971, on page 47. Four young men were acquitted of seven counts of rape against a 15 year old girl. The reason: "...rape was not the proper charge as the question of whether the girl consented to the acts was not clear." There was no denial that the seven acts of intercourse had taken place.
- The evidence introduced against the girl and in favor of the defendants: "...after almost two hours of cross-examination from four defence lawyers it was brought out that she had drunk eight bottles of beer that night, that she had had intercourse willingly with—— the week previously, and that she was suffering blackouts of memory and hallucinations after someone slipped LSD into a drink at a party before the night in question.
- She testified that she has used hashish and marijauna."
- The facts that she might have had intercourse the week before, and has used drugs were attempts to cast a reflection on her character, and had nothing to do with whether or not an act of rape occurred at a specific time and place. The fact that she was under the influence of both alcohol and drugs at the time of the "incident" did not appear to raise the question of whether, under those conditions, she was capable of giving a meaningful consent (i.e. that she knew what she was consenting to), to acts of intercourse.



cf. Erna Paris, "Nice Girls Don't Get Raped, Do They?", Chatelaine, Vol. 44, No. 9 (September, 1971), p. 31.

cf. Clifford Kirkpatrick and Eugene Kanin, "Male Sex Aggression on a College Campus", American Sociological Review, 22 (February, 1957), pp. 52-58.

Kanin and Kirkpatrick found that a degree of sexual aggression against women also occurred in dating behavior. Fifty-six percent of their sample of female college students experienced some male sexual aggression ranging from attempts at necking through attempts at intercourse involving violence. Sexual demands appeared stronger in steady, ongoing relationships than in casual dating. Few offenses were reported by the women to parents or authorities, and only when attempts at intercourse were accompanied by threats of violence was the relationship discontinued by the women.

It appears from this study, that sexual aggressiveness is condoned as "natural" in males.

cf. Arnold W. Green, "The 'Cult of Personality' and Sexual Relations", Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 608-615. The males involved in the study by Kanin and Kirkpatrick were middle class college students. An even higher incidence of aggression might be expected among working class youths, where the virility ethic is even more pronounced.

83. Nicholas Babchuk and Alan P. Bates, "The Primary Relations of Middle-Class Couples: A Study in Male Dominance", William J. Goode, op.cit., pp. 124-131.

These researchers found that the friends of a couple tend to be chosen by the husband rather than the wife, and that close friendships tend to arise between the males, rather than between women. This tendency would keep women isolated from meaningful relationships with each other after marriage as well as before.

cf. Elizabeth Bott, "Conjugal Roles and Social Networks", Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 248-257. In her study of working class families, it was found that, if women did develop close relationships with other women, they were close female relatives, and occurred only if the family lived close to the wife's relatives.

84. "How Appearance Divides Women", Ladies' Home Journal, (August, 1970), p. 69.

85. Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, The Mark of Oppression (New York: Meridian Books, 1962).

86. John Sirjamaki, "Culture Configurations in the American Family". Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 295-303. "Family roles of husband and wife should be based on a sexual division of labor, but with the male status being superior." p. 301.

cf. Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Role Differentiation in the Nuclear Family: A Comparative Study", Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 329-338.

87. Jessie Bernard, op.cit., p. 719. "Marriage as a status appears to be more important to them (women) than to men."



88. Eleanore B. Luckey, "Marital Satisfaction and Congruent Self-Spouse Concepts", Social Forces, 39 (December, 1960), pp. 153-157. Cited by Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., p. 479.

89. Jessie Bernard, op.cit., p. 189.

90. G. Gurin, J. Veroff, and Sheila Feld, Americans View Their Mental Health (New York: Basic Books, 1960). Cited by Jessie Bernard, op.cit., p. 682.

cf. L. Srole, et.al., Mental Health in the Metropolis: the midtown Manhattan study (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962). Cited by Jessie Bernard, op.cit., p. 682.

91. Talcott Parsons, "The Social Structure of the Family", The Family: Its Function and Destiny, ed. Ruth N. Anshen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), pp. 241-274. Cited by Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., p. 243.

92. Ibid., p. 245.

93. Ibid., p. 246.

94. Ibid.

95. "Should This Marriage Be Saved?", Ladies' Home Journal, (August, 1970), p. 68.

96. Ibid.

97. Yonina Talmon, "The Family in a Revolutionary Movement — The Case of the Kibbutz in Israel", Comparative Family Systems, ed. M.F. Nimkoff (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1965), pp. 259-286.

Studies such as those of M.E. Spiro, Children of the Kibbutz (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958) have attempted to show that the socialization of the child in a communal setting resulted in children who were shy, reserved, and withdrawn, and tended to show hostility, to maintain psychological distance, and seldom formed emotional attachments. These characteristics were interpreted as meaning that the child was poorly adjusted because of the socialization patterns of the kibbutz. One might suspect that the criterion for "good adjustment" was the middle class American child. Given the environment in which he lived, the child of the kibbutz might be quite well adjusted and still be labelled as abnormal by the values of North America. "Normalcy" cannot be separated from its cultural context.

98. Philip E. Slater, The Pursuit of Loneliness — American Culture at the Breaking Point (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970). Cited in a book review in The Futurist, 4 (April, 1970), p. 57.

99. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 319.

100. Ibid., pp. 275-279, 313.

101. Ibid., pp. 319-325.







102. Ibid., p. 324.
103. Ibid., p. 322.
104. Ian Adams, The Poverty Wall (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 1970), Chapter 4, pp. 61-74.
105. S.L. Bem and D.J. Bem, "Case Study of a Nonconscious Ideology: training the woman to know her place", Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs, D.J. Bem (Belmont, Calif., 1970). Cited in Women: A Journal of Liberation, 1 (Fall, 1969), p. 12.
106. E. Dahlstrom, The Changing Roles of Men and Women (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1967). Cited in Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 33.
107. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 33.
108. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell Books, 1963), p. 231.
109. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., pp. 30-31.
110. Women's Bureau. Canada Department of Labour, Facts and Figures: Women in the Labour Force, 1969 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970), p.5.
111. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 21. This figure includes income from investments and property as well as paid labour.
112. Ibid., p. 54.
113. "Graduates and Jobs: A Grave New World", Time, (May 24, 1971), p. 54.
114. Facts and Figures, op.cit., p. 11.
115. Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., p. 244.
116. Ibid., p. 561.
117. Ibid., p. 562.
118. Robert O. Blood, Jr. and Robert L. Hamblin, "The Effects of the Wife's Employment on the Family Power Structure", Bell & Vogel, op.cit., pp. 137-142. "Our data suggest that the working wife tends to feel that she is entitled to more authority as a result of her work. However, in actual decision-making practice, she fails to use this economic lever, perhaps intuitively recognizing that to do so would impair the couple's solidarity." pp. 141-142.
119. William J. Goode, "The Meaning of Class Differentials in the Divorce Rate", William J. Goode, op.cit., pp. 204-206.  
cf. David M. Heer, "Dominance and the Working Wife", William J. Goode, op.cit., pp. 115-123.



120. Women's Bureau. Canada Department of Labour, Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 5.
121. Ibid., p. 5.
122. Ibid., Tables 17 and 18, pp. 35-36.
123. Ibid., p. 8.
124. Ibid., Table 23, p. 41.
125. Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements, op.cit., p. iv and p. 17.
126. Lois W. Hoffman, "Effects on Children: Summary and Discussion", The Employed Mother in America, eds. Ivan F. Nye & Lois W. Hoffman (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), pp. 190-212. Cited by Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., p. 569.
127. Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1967, Annual Report No. 50 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968).
128. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 95. The average difference between men and women in time missed is two days per year.
129. Ibid., p. 57.
- The lower the income of the husband, the more likely it is that the wife will work, whatever the ages of the children, to help provide necessities. The more education a wife has, the more likely she is to stay in the labour force or return to it early. This tendency lessens as the income of the husband increases.
130. Fourteenth Annual Report, op.cit., "Section 1, Alberta Summary Salary and Wage Rate Data in Selected Positions", pp. 2-4. Section 1 comprised a summary of a selected sample of all the occupations listed in the report.
131. Facts and Figures, op.cit., Table 12, p. 16.
132. "Women in Trade Unions", The Labour Gazette: Official Journal Canada Department of Labour, Vol. 71, No. 10 (October, 1971), p. 682.
133. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., pp. 64-65.
134. Many unionists are in opposition to working women, on the grounds that employers will hire women for less pay rather than employ unionized male workers. They do not see the solution as one of unionizing women so that equal pay for equal work will be enforced.
135. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 89.
136. The solution is not to ban such protective legislation, but to extend it to male workers as well.



137. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., p. 92.
138. Lucigrace Switzer, "This Revolution Asks Something of Us All", College and University Business, (February, 1970), p. 52.
139. Robert M. Cunningham, "Women Who Made It Offer Insights (Some Unintended) into Their Problems", College and University Business, (February, 1970), p. 61.
140. Edward Z. Dager, passim.
141. Ibid., p. 758.
142. Eleanor E. Maccoby, "Women's Intellect", Seymour M. Farber & Roger Wilson, op.cit., pp. 24-39.
143. Edward Z. Dager, op.cit., p. 759.
144. Clifford Kirkpatrick, The Family: As Process and Institution, (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1963), pp. 168-169. Cited by Gerald R. Leslie, op.cit., pp. 559-560.
145. Ibid., p. 560.
146. See above, discussion of working wives, pp. 69-71.
147. Jessie Bernard, "Women, Marriage, and the Future", The Futurist, 4 (April, 1970), pp. 41-43.
148. Betty Friedan, op.cit., Chapter 10, pp. 224-246.
149. Young women concerned with the problems of pollution and over-population are even beginning to question the value of having children under any circumstances.
150. See above, discussion of childrearing, pp. 64-65.
151. The structural shifts discussed by Bernard are also most applicable to middle class women, and to upper-lower class women. Poor women do not have access to mechanical aids to housework, nor to birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Neither do they have the time -- if they work -- nor the resources, to devote themselves to a full time child care program.
152. Vasectomy appears to be increasing in popularity as a male contraceptive device, but it still has severe limitations. The newest techniques for performing vasectomies offer a 50 percent chance of reversal. Most doctors will not perform vasectomies for unmarried men, for married men under the age of thirty, nor for married men who do not already have two or three children. The doctors reason that the man might change his mind at a later date and wish a reversal of the operation. Doctors do not wish to be held responsible for a reversal attempt which fails. Vasectomy is a contraceptive technique used primarily by married men over the age of thirty, who have "completed their family", and who are middle and upper middle class.





## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In order to gather data for the thesis, the researcher engaged in participant observation of the Women's Liberation group in Edmonton, Alberta for the period of July 1970 through June 1971.

#### I. REASONS FOR THE CHOICE OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

There were several specific reasons for the researcher's choice of participant observation as the research strategy employed. First, she knew almost nothing about the subject of Women's Liberation at the time when she first considered it as a thesis topic. Beyond the basic theoretical framework discussed in Chapters I and II, she had no expectations regarding the specific characteristics of Women's Liberation as an organization. Second, she had no access to material, either descriptive or analytic, written directly on the subject of Women's Liberation. Third, there was a Women's Liberation group in Edmonton, which appeared to be the researcher's only available contact with the phenomenon. She joined the group, hoping to emerge with some tentative hypotheses, although she had no pre-conceived notions as to the form or direction they would take.

The researcher had planned, after an initial period of observation, to test some emergent hypotheses through the use of interview data. She had hoped to interview as many women as possible who were involved in the Women's Liberation Movement (henceforth referred to as WLM) in the city. Although an interview schedule was constructed and pre-tested, the plan to use it proved impossible to put into action. There were indications



that some of the members would have objected to the interview schedule because of concern about the uses to which the information could be put.

This concern had two bases. First, co-operation with such a project would, in the words of one woman, "put one in the position of being used by The System." The perception was that "The System" already used women in every area of their lives, without their willing consent. That another woman, in attempting to fulfill one of the requisites of that "System", namely, write a thesis to obtain a degree, would use other women only to further her own needs, was a further evidence of attempted exploitation, but one that could be thwarted by refusal to co-operate. The researcher learned early in her experience with WLM that the only reason acceptable to members for becoming involved in it was sincere, altruistic interest in the organization and its ideology as a woman. Interest as a student of human behavior was not legitimate, and somewhat suspect.

Also, during the period in which the study took place, the group became involved in an episode of attempted radicalization. This episode had long term repercussions, including personal anxiety to many women, the generation of a great deal of hostility and mistrust between individual members, and the deepening of splits between ideological factions, with a resulting shift in the power structure of the total group. Many of the questions in the interview schedule were concerned with the political orientations of the respondent. Considering the suspicions regarding political intentions that were expressed in the group, the researcher believed there was a strong possibility that an attempt to gain information in such a direct way could be interpreted as a personal attempt to manipulate women in the group, either by undermining them through gossip, or by attacking them directly.



Because of these factors, the researcher decided to drop any plans to conduct formal interviews. The possibility seemed too great that the membership would withdraw its acceptance of her if they perceived her as acting solely in her own outside interests, or as a member of a political faction within the group.<sup>1</sup>

## II. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AS A RESEARCH STRATEGY

The whole study, then, has been shaped by these considerations. As a result, the researcher's decision was to employ the research strategy of participant observation. The kinds of data gathered, their analysis, and the conclusions drawn, were all directed by this particular strategy.

The term "research strategy" was used rather than "method", because participant observation is not a single method. As a combination of methods and techniques, it is used to gather data. However,

In participant observation studies...data collection is not a distinctive phase in the research process but rather is one analytically distinguishable aspect of a multiplex process. Design, analysis, and write-ups are also being carried out simultaneously with data collection, and all four aspects continually influence and impinge upon one another.<sup>2</sup>

### Major Utility

The characteristics of participant observation as a style of research dictate its utilities and its limitations. It is considered a fruitful approach to exploratory research; as "...pilot inquiries into new problem areas where the purpose is the production of hypotheses rather than the verification of them."<sup>3</sup>

### Limitations

The limitations of the strategy regarding generalizability and hypothesis testing ability both spring from the usual inability of the





strategy to utilize probability theory. Since a participant observation study usually involves only one case (i.e. not a case study of one person, but of one organization of a particular type, including all the members of that organization), and because sampling within the organization under study is more likely to be of the availability type rather than a random sample, the strategy is inadequate and inefficient for obtaining information on frequency distributions. Similarly, the strategy is non-standardized<sup>4</sup> in that the research direction may change during the data gathering process in order to explore more relevant data to emerging hypotheses, and in that respondents are not interviewed uniformly, but about what they each know and/or perceive. These factors preclude the statistical manipulations which are conventionally considered the only valid and reliable means of testing hypotheses and thereby permitting generalization. "This means that quantitative relationships usually cannot be established and the researcher has to depend on a more impressionistic interpretation of the data..."<sup>5</sup>

The researcher was well aware that the conclusions drawn regarding WLM resulted from a focus on only some of the many aspects of the phenomenon under study; and that those categories on which she did focus were interpreted in a specific manner dictated by the theoretical framework and by her own intellectual orientation. The hypotheses which were suggested emerged from a system of descriptive categories which attempted to cover those features or properties of WLM that she found most significant.

### Advantages

While aware of the limitations of participant observation in testing hypotheses, the researcher found that the strategy did have a number



of advantages in terms of suggesting hypotheses, largely through the responsiveness of the strategy to the data at hand.<sup>6</sup> The researcher entered the field with a theoretical framework and general topics or "problems" in mind as directives, but had no specific hypotheses or pre-determined research formula.<sup>7</sup> She was not bound by a rigid, preconceived structure, but was free to revise and reformulate the design in order to better reflect the actual data as the period of observation continued.

In such a study, unexpected hypotheses emerge, while others can be refined, qualified, or rejected as the evidence indicates; since analysis and data collection can be carried out simultaneously and continually. One is not restricted to the analysis of data gathered at one time, based on rigid indices drawn up before entry into the field, which may be quite irrelevant to the actual situation. Because one is in close contact with the field situation, one is better able to avoid misleading or meaningless questions, and to classify respondents in terms of criteria that are observable in the situation. The perceptions of the subjects — their own interpretation of the situation in which they find themselves — are regarded as valuable data. Also, one is not forced to rely solely on verbalizations. "The field worker can generally impute motives more validly by contrasting stated ideals with actual behavior, supplemented by the informant's reactions to 'feedback'."<sup>8</sup>

### III. FIELD RELATIONS

The data which can be gathered through participant observation are elicited largely through the use of relationships established between the researcher and the members of the organization under study.<sup>9</sup> In establishing field relations, the researcher must gain entry to the group he is studying, and adopt some role within it — a role by which others



can classify him and in which he can most effectively function as an observer. "The role which he claims — or to which he is assigned by the subjects — is perhaps the single most important determinant of what he will be able to learn."<sup>10</sup> This role determines how other members of the group will interact with him; what they will reveal and what they will attempt to conceal. The role also sets time and space limitations on the observer.

Strauss et.al.<sup>11</sup> discuss the temporally developing nature of participant observation, dividing a study into three phases: 1) general observation 2) sharpening of foci and an emerging set of propositions 3) systematic effort to "pinpoint" hypotheses, and a search for negative or qualifying, as well as for supporting instances. Later informants and incidents can be selected in such a way as to throw additional light on emerging hypotheses.

In the field, information is also gathered that at the time seems irrelevant, but later, when the perspective of the situation has changed, it may become valuable. The method allows for the study of process and change over a period of time, as well as for the in-depth study of the interrelationships of many variables in a complex social situation. In such cases of complex social organizations, "Difficult to quantify variables are probably less distorted by unstructured observation and interviewing than by an abortive effort to operationalize them for quantification by a survey."<sup>12</sup>

In studying WLM, the outstanding prerequisite to entry into the group was to be female. The fact that the researcher is in her mid-twenties also facilitated ease of entry, since almost all other active members also fitted into this age bracket (20-28). She was also aided by the sponsorship of the informal leader of the group. This woman was the





first from WLM that the researcher contacted at the start of the study. Through her, in the early stages of the study, the researcher became acquainted with several other women highly active in the group.

The role which the researcher played in the group corresponded to the "participant-as-observer" discussed by Gold.<sup>13</sup> The only legitimate reason accepted by the members for becoming interested in WLM and remaining in it, was personal interest as a woman. The researcher undertook participation in the activities of WLM as a member. From the period July 1970 through February 1971 she attended all except two of the meetings of the Parent Group<sup>14</sup>; participated in actions, including the abortion campaign demonstration and rally of February 13; attended "rap sessions"; took part in planning committees; and from December through February attended Socialist Women's Caucus meetings. She also attended the first Canada-wide convention of WLM, held November 21 and 22 in Saskatoon. Early in November, she became co-ordinator of the Abortion Referral Service, one of several small groups set up within the larger structure of WLM, to carry out specific actions or services endorsed by the total group. Participation in the organization was maximized as far as time and space limitations allowed. For example, if two meetings were being held at the same time in two separate locations, the researcher would be able to attend only one.

In March 1971, the researcher made a decision to devote less time to intensive participation within the organization. She felt that some limitation was necessary at that point, in order to carry out work simultaneously on writing the first chapters of the thesis. Essentially, this meant that meetings were attended with less regularity, and participation in committee work was minimized. However, this lessening of involvement was offset by maintaining regular contacts with several respondents within



the organization. Participation in the Abortion Referral Service was also maintained. This phase of observation continued until the end of June 1971, when the researcher ceased to reside in Edmonton. At the end of August, a trip to Edmonton was made, in order to obtain follow-up information from respondents concerning the activities of the organization for the remainder of the summer, and plans for the coming year.

At no time did the researcher attempt to conceal the fact that she was writing her thesis on the subject of Women's Liberation. This information was volunteered at the outset to the informal leader of the group when she was first contacted. During the first several weeks of participation, as a new member, the researcher was sometimes asked what she did, and/or why she had become interested in WLM. Her answer was that she was interested in WLM in a personal sense, that she agreed with the WLM stand on women's issues as far as she understood it, and that also, as a student, that she was writing her thesis on the subject of WLM. If asked specifically what aspect of WLM she was interested in, the answer was that she was treating women as a minority group — that we as women are involved in a power relationship with men, and that WLM is a particular kind of response to oppression, analogous to the black response to white oppression. She also stated that the study was an exploratory one, so had no specific hypotheses on the subject. Since most of the women already had adopted the perception of women's role in this manner, they tended also to accept these statements as explanatory, although the researcher had the impression that they would sometimes have liked a longer discussion of the subject.



#### IV. DATA QUALITY CONTROL

In the course of the study, the researcher encountered the problem of data quality control. Several factors contributed to the possible contamination of data. She attempted to control those factors of which she was aware.

##### Reactive Effects

One problem cited in the literature is "reactive effects of the observer's presence or behavior on the phenomenon under observation."<sup>15</sup> Although participating as a full member of WLM, the researcher attempted to minimally influence the attitudes and behavior of others by expressing her own opinions as rarely as possible, and then in as neutral a manner as possible. She attempted never to express a negative reaction to anything a member said or did, but to accept any statement in a positive or at least neutral manner, and never to "gossip" or pass on information known about one woman to another.

The problem of the conflict between the demands of one's own personality needs and values, the demands of the observer role, and the demands of the assumed role as member of the group, also discussed by Gold<sup>16</sup>, did arise in the area of reciprocity. Since the researcher was defined by the other women as a colleague, she was expected to state her "position" on various issues relevant to the group. However, she wanted neither to influence anyone else's position by stating her own, nor to alienate one faction by making remarks that could be construed as supporting another faction. On the other hand, silence could also influence the members, in the sense that it left them in a state of uncertainty or ambiguity regarding the researcher's position. In an attempt to decrease this ambiguity, she contributed factual information about issues





and topics as often as possible in group discussion, and also used opportunities when there appeared to be group agreement on some local issue in order to offer a mildly supportive summary statement of the already existing consensus. She always avoided expressing support or disagreement with any ideological or "political" statement, and also avoided volunteering any political position of her own.

This approach was relatively successful in the Parent Group and Rap Group, since some women were considered naturally more vocal than others and women who did not express opinions were not pushed to do so. Personal conversations could be handled in the same manner. The approach became difficult to sustain in the Socialist Women's Caucus, since, after their unsuccessful attempt to introduce more radical ideas to the larger group, these women became deeply concerned that those in that faction express commitment to a particular political conviction. Although the situation in that faction was somewhat uncomfortable for a time on that account, the researcher's continued attendance and interest in it were interpreted as signs of her commitment to it.

A partial indicator of reactive effects lies in a comparison of the orientations which members have towards the researcher, with the orientations they express towards other members of the group. During the period of the study, most women in the group appeared to behave towards the researcher as they did towards other regular members. Interaction between most members of the Parent Group were generally impersonal — a condition often remarked on by the women themselves. Close informal relationships appeared to exist only within the ranks of the Young Socialists, and in the core membership of the Rap Group, as well as between a few pairs of individuals.



## Observer Bias

The second major problem affecting data quality control in participant observation studies is "distorting effects of selective perception and interpretation on the observer's part."<sup>17</sup> The biases of the observer stem from two sources: his own sociocultural values and personality needs, and his intellectual framework and professional training. The researcher was aware of some of her own biases, and attempted to control their effects on the field relationships established, her perceptions of situations and behaviors, and her interpretations of those situations and behaviors.

One of the biases of the researcher centered around the often expressed attitude in rap sessions that defined all males as "oppressors". Since she herself is involved in what she considers a healthy, on-going relationship with a male, she found herself inwardly reacting in a personal, negative way to this definition, with its implications that her own relationship was also one of oppressor and oppressed. She attempted to handle this reaction in two ways: 1) searching for the reasons why these particular women defined all men as oppressors, and interpreting their attitudes as reaction formations to their own personal experiences with men 2) obtaining evidence that she was not engaging merely in selective perception of anti-male attitudes, by noting statements made by other women who had attended rap sessions and had also perceived the same attitude expressed consistently.

A second bias involved a clash between the personal political viewpoint of the researcher, and the political ideology prevailing to some degree in a large proportion of the women in WLM. The researcher does not accept "revolutionary socialism" as her own solution to the problems that face women as a group. Again, she felt that, if she were aware of



this personal bias, and recognized that the orientations of other women stemmed from their own personal experience, that she could treat these orientations as data without the danger of her own bias contaminating them.

The definition of women as a subordinate group might be considered by some as a bias. In Chapter II, in which women are discussed as a subordinate group, their status relative to men is examined in terms of the same concepts and indicators that have been applied to other subordinate groups — with analogous results.

Active participation in a group under study also increases the probability of affective involvement and the positive biases stemming therefrom. There appears to be a continuum here ranging from empathy (sympathetic identification) to a total loss of objectivity (projective distortion). Through participation in actions, speaking engagements with several groups outside WLM but under their auspices, and through participation in the Abortion Referral Service, the researcher came to feel that she had gained some personal understanding of the reasons for the members' perception of their own positions and the position of women in our society. She often noted statements made by other members concerning situations in which they perceived that they were powerless or at a disadvantage because they were women, experiences which led to feelings of frustration and anger on their part. Since she was aware that the activities in which an observer participates cannot be assumed to have the same meaning for her as for other members of the group, but since she also experienced these same reactions in similar situations, she took these statements as indicators that the same meanings were indeed imputed to situations perceived as discriminatory.





This feeling of empathic understanding, of course, leads into another possible bias. Data is always interpreted in some way — it is necessary to impute a meaning to the verbal and non-verbal actions of the subject beyond the meaning that he himself imputes to his own actions. Such interpretation is a potential source of contamination, although it should be noted that it is not a problem limited to participant observation, but is also applicable to the interpretation of data from questionnaires.

To the extent that a participant observer can participate and still retain a measure of noninvolvement, his technique provides a basis for an approach to the problem of validity. The background of information which he acquires in time makes him familiar with the psychology of his respondents and their social milieu. With this knowledge he is able to impose a broader perspective on his data, and, hence to evaluate their validity on the basis of standards extraneous to the immediate situation. To accomplish this, it is necessary that the participant observer be skeptical of himself in all data gathering situations; he must objectify himself in relation to his respondents and the passing present. This power of self-objectification leads to his further alienation from the society he studies. Between this alienation and attempts at objective evaluation lies an approach to the problem of validity.<sup>18</sup>

McCall<sup>19</sup>, in discussing data quality control, feels that every item of information, whether derived from direct observation or interviewing, should be evaluated for its internal and external consistency. Data quality control should involve the use of multiple indicators of any particular item, and a high degree of agreement among indicators. Any instabilities or inconsistencies should call for investigation in order to determine whether they reflect contaminating influences on data. He cites three possible sources of contamination: 1) items never volunteered or provided spontaneously by the subject, but only on the elicitation of the researcher 2) items never provided in the company of other subjects, but only when alone with the researcher 3) items



manifest only in verbalizations, or only in observed behavior, but not in both.

However, there may be very good reasons for differences between verbal and non-verbal behavior, or between privately held and publicly voiced statements, which are truly representative of the situation at hand, and have nothing to do with the abilities of the participant observer to accurately and objectively record data. For example, the subject may not put his verbalized attitudes into action, because he perceives that the situation he is in does not permit him to do so. He may have conflicting attitudes. Attitudes may be voiced in private that would be regarded as deviant if said in the presence of other members of the group. A member of the group, attempting to manipulate others, may appear to show many inconsistencies between his stated attitudes and his actual behavior. Lack of communication between members of a group may result in inconsistent behaviors and inaccurate reporting of incidents.

Concerning the validity of respondents' statements, Dean and Whyte make the following observations:

The informant's statement represents merely the perception of the informant, filtered and modified by his cognitive and emotional reactions and reported through his personal verbal images. Thus we acknowledge initially that we are getting merely the informant's picture of the world as he sees it. And we are getting it only as he is willing to pass it on to us in this particular interview situation. Under other circumstances the moves he reveals to us may be much different.<sup>20</sup>

...the interviewer is not looking for the true attitude or sentiment. He should recognize that informants can and do hold conflicting sentiments at one time and they hold varying sentiments according to the situations in which they find themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it is important not to treat contradictions of speech and actions as deliberate attempts on the part of the informant to lie (in most cases), but as conflicts for the subjects themselves. Their



statements and actions reveal things about their feelings and perceptions, from which the observer is forced to make inferences about the actual environment or events they have experienced.

#### Limitations on Opportunities to Observe

The third major problem of data quality control is "limitations on the observer's ability to witness all the relevant aspects of the phenomenon in question."<sup>22</sup> Here, the situations one is able to observe, and the relationships one is able to establish are limited by the role and status to which one is assigned in the group under study. These in turn partially shape the time and space limitations which are always present.

Although the researcher was accepted as a member of WLM, she was always a marginal member, because she did not state a "position" which would firmly identify her as a member of one faction or another. She did not invest the time and emotional commitment to become deeply involved with one faction, because she felt it would impair her ability to keep up communications with all factions. The information she gathered was therefore partly a function of that marginality. What she was able to observe in the organization was a consequence of her position in the network of relationships in WLM.

In one faction, the Young Socialist women, it was rumored among the rest of the group that their WLM strategy was determined in the meetings of the Young Socialist organization, a political organization including men as well as women. Since the researcher was not a member of this organization, she never attended any of their meetings to establish the truth of this allegation, but was only able to observe their behavior in the context of WLM meetings, conferences, and the abortion campaign





of February 1971, which they organized.

Also, although she attended Wednesday night sessions of the Rap Group, she was never able to attend Sunday night rap sessions. The Wednesday night sessions were "open" and involved women who came only sporadically. The Sunday night sessions were composed of women who met regularly, and was specifically closed to outsiders. Since this small group of women was stable and continuing, the contents of discussion could be assumed to be different, and perhaps on a more analytical level than those of the Wednesday night sessions. The researcher was only able to infer this, from prior knowledge of the political ideology of several women who entered the Sunday sessions, and from the statement of the informal leader of the sessions, towards the end of the study, that the content of the Sunday night discussions would be becoming "more political" in future.

## V. TECHNIQUES OF OBSERVATION USED

Direct observation and participation in WLM meetings and actions were supplemented by informant and respondent interviewing, in order to obtain more thorough information on the aspects of the organization that could not be observed personally. Specifically, these techniques were used to gather information: 1) on meetings and actions the researcher was personally unable to attend, 2) on the structure and membership of the group before she entered it, 3) on the perceptions which individual members had of their own involvement in WLM.

Women were regarded as "respondents" when presenting information on their own perceptions and personal feelings, their own positions or attitudes regarding what had occurred or what was occurring. Such information was regarded as purely subjective. Women were regarded as



"informants" only when they presented information on actual events that the researcher had no opportunity to observe directly, and when they were not referring to themselves or to their own behavior, thus implying a degree of objectivity to their reports. Although women were in some cases directly asked about events, information was preferably gathered from spontaneous statements. All information was treated as respondent information, rather than informant, unless information about events proved consistent from several sources.

The term "interviewing" is used in a very loose sense — referring to casual, informal discussions between the researcher and members as part of the ongoing interaction of the group, or in personal conversations with one member. Reliance was not placed on asking direct questions regarding perceptions and motives, preferring to have these expressions emerge spontaneously in the course of a normal conversation. It was felt that voluntarily offered statements were, on the whole, although not invariably, better indicators of the respondent's attitudes and perceptions, than were solicited statements. They were statements of "what was on her mind".

Use was also made of documents written by members of the group as supplementary information — position papers gathered from meetings and conferences, and articles written by women for the local newsletter. Other literature available to women in the group, and examined by the researcher, was contained in a library of pamphlets, magazine articles, and books, written by women in the movement in Canada and the United States. The researcher also subscribed to several newspapers and journals printed by WLM groups. The literature was examined for major themes, and for positions in terms of political orientation. A full list of these documents is provided in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.



## VI. THE CHOICE OF VARIABLES AND INDICATORS

In choosing the variables thought pertinent to the topic of the study, the direction was dictated by the theoretical framework established before entering the field, and discussed in Chapters I and II of the thesis. However, most of the variables relevant to the group itself were only discovered in the course of the field work. In choosing indicators of the theoretical variables, the researcher had defined the concepts of avoidance, reform, and revolution behaviorally in Chapter I. The specific empirical behaviors and properties serving to measure the presence of these concepts were again discovered only in the context of the field work itself. The period of attempted radicalization in the group, and the changes in structure, influence, and emphasis which resulted from that attempt, provided particularly valuable empirical data for the study. The researcher hopes to show that these behavioral indicators will reflect an accurate measurement of the theoretical concepts, and make the suggested hypotheses more credible, realizing that qualitative evidence can only show the existence of a phenomenon, but cannot demonstrate the frequency of its occurrence.

The categories or variables, the behavioral indicators chosen, and the resulting hypotheses are discussed in the context of Chapters IV, V, and VI. Their discussion in a methodology chapter is more applicable to a study involving survey design, where a rigid design is set up before entry into the field, than it is to a participant observation study, where their discussion leads immediately into data analysis.

Chapter IV will provide a description of the sample, including the social characteristics of the membership, a brief history of the movement, and a discussion of the structure of the organization in Edmonton.





Footnotes: Chapter III

1. A hostile response to investigation is common among other social movements, and is spreading to the general public as well, necessitating the use of more subtle instruments than the formal interview.
2. George J. McCall & J.L. Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader (Don Mills, Ontario: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 61.
3. John P. Dean, Robert L. Eichhorn, and Lois R. Dean, "Limitations and Advantages of Unstructured Methods", Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader, eds. George J. McCall and J.L. Simmons (Don Mills, Ontario: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 20.
4. Ibid., p. 20.
5. Ibid., p. 20.
6. Ibid., pp. 22-24.
7. Anselm Stauss, et.al., "The Process of Field Work", McCall and Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation, pp. 24-26.
8. John P. Dean, Robert L. Eichhorn, and Lois R. Dean, op.cit., p. 23.
9. Ibid., p. 20.
10. George J. McCall and J.L. Simmons, op.cit., p. 29.
11. Anselm Stauss, et.al., op.cit., pp. 24-26.
12. John P. Dean, Robert L. Eichhorn, and Lois R. Dean, op.cit., p. 23.
13. Raymond L. Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations", McCall and Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation, pp. 30-38.
14. In August 1970, the Women's Liberation organization in Edmonton consisted of two major branches, the Parent Group and the Rap Group. These two groups operated independently of each other, although there was contact between them. The Parent Group was internally differentiated by the presence of three ideological factions: the Young Socialists, the Socialist Women's Caucus, and the Silent Majority. In November-December 1970, the Socialist Women's Caucus separated from the Parent Group and formed their own independent organization.
15. George J. McCall, "Data Quality Control in Participant Observation", McCall and Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation, p. 128.
16. Raymond L. Gold, op.cit., pp. 30-38.
17. George J. McCall, op.cit., p. 128.



18. Arthur J. Vidich, "Participant Observation and the Collection and Interpretation of Data", McCall and Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation, pp. 86-87.
19. George J. McCall, op.cit., pp. 130-131.
20. John P. Dean and William Foote Whyte, "How Do You Know If the Informant Is Telling the Truth?", McCall and Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation, pp. 105-106.
21. Ibid., p. 114.
22. George J. McCall, op.cit., p. 128.



## CHAPTER IV

### MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN EDMONTON

This chapter will be concerned with a description of the sample observed in the study. A description will first be provided of the social characteristics which were typical of the membership. These characteristics then will be discussed as factors predisposing women to join WLM. Since WLM has been heavily influenced, ideologically and historically, by the New Left, an outline of the ideology of the New Left will be presented, followed by a brief description of the inception and growth of WLM as a movement which has emerged from the New Left.

The organizational structure of WLM in Edmonton will then be discussed. Since WLM in this city consisted of two major branches, the Parent Group and the Rap Group, they will be described in separate sections. They will each be discussed with reference to their base of operation, the structure of their meetings, their membership, their recruitment patterns, and their contacts with the larger society. In addition, the committee structures of the Parent Group will be discussed, an area in which there was no parallel in the Rap Group. Also, an introductory statement will be made concerning the presence of three conflicting ideological factions within the Parent Group: the Young Socialists, the Socialist Women's Caucus, and the Silent Majority. The respective ideologies of these three factions, and that of the Rap Group, will be compared in Chapter V. A brief statement will be made in the present chapter regarding the relationship between





the Parent Group and the Rap Group. The relationships among the Young Socialists, the Socialist Women's Caucus, the Silent Majority, and the Rap Group will be discussed more fully in Chapter V, indicating the influence of the ideologies of the respective factions within the organization.

## I. MEMBERSHIP OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN EDMONTON

During the course of the study, contact was made with some 50 women, and information was gathered pertaining to their social characteristics. Of these, approximately 30 women were deeply and consistently involved in WLM over a period of time sufficient for the researcher to interact with them on many occasions, and in different situations. The remainder of the women were more peripheral members, whom the researcher saw only briefly and sporadically. Observations concerning the social characteristics of the members should therefore be considered as most typical of those women who carried on a deep and continuous involvement in WLM, since the information on them is the most reliable and complete.

### Social Characteristics

Table III provides frequency distributions of estimated age, marital status, number of women having children, educational status, and employment of the membership, based on a sample of 50 women from WLM in Edmonton.

The membership tended to homogeneity with respect to certain characteristics. The women were young — typically in their early and mid-twenties. Forty of the women, or 80 percent, were estimated by the researcher to be between the ages of 21 and 30. About equal proportions were legally married, living extra-legally with a man, or were not involved in any



TABLE III

SOME SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FIFTY MEMBERS  
OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN EDMONTON

Social characteristic	Frequency
Estimated age	
under 21	7
21 - 25	26
26 - 30	14
over 30	<u>3</u>
Total	50
Marital status	
married	16
extra-legal living arrangement	10
single	17
separated or divorced	4
unknown	<u>3</u>
Total	50
Children	
number with children	13
number without children	34
unknown	<u>3</u>
Total	50
Education	
high school student	3
university undergraduate program	11
complete Bachelor's degree	16
post-graduate training	7
unknown	<u>13</u>
Total	50
Employment	
employed	20
student	17
unemployed	2
unknown	<u>11</u>
Total	50



living arrangement with a man at the time of the study. Approximately 70 percent (34 women) were childless. Of the dozen or so who had children, 6 were deeply involved in WLM.

The university campus appeared to be one of the major recruiting grounds for membership. Approximately 70 percent (34 women) of the women were known by the researcher to have obtained some university education. Seventeen women, or roughly 40 percent of the sample, were university students at the time of the study. Three others were attending high school. Many of the rest had graduated within two years of the time of the study. Their university education indicated another characteristic, a middle class family of orientation.

Concomitant with the strong tendency to a university affiliation, there was often a history of political activism in the student Left. If much of the recruitment for WLM came from the university campus, it tended to centre even more narrowly on politically active campus women. This was especially true of the women most deeply involved in WLM. Perhaps a dozen of these women belonged to a web of acquaintanceship which had lasted over a period of years through continuing involvement in Leftist student politics. Some of these women had been instrumental in initially forming WLM in Edmonton, and others had been drawn in subsequently through their acquaintanceship and similarity of interests.

This characteristic of political activism was also typical of the women who came to Edmonton WLM from elsewhere. There existed a pattern of high geographical mobility among the women. At least 16, or about a third, had come to the city from other parts of Canada. In addition, 11 others (20 percent) were non-Canadian. Five had come from Europe as students' wives; the remaining 6 were American expatriates who had come to Canada in response to what they believed to be a repressive political





system in their own country. These women also had experience with the New Left in the United States. American women (A, D, G, and H) held positions of informal leadership within the WLM organization in Edmonton. Of the four factions, only the Young Socialists was composed exclusively of Canadians.

The WLM group in Edmonton experienced a considerable turnover in personnel during the period of the study, which was partly a function of such geographical movement. At least 10 members moved out of the city during that period, and 7 new members were recent arrivals to the city. The movement of the women contributed to the spread of information between WLM groups in different cities, since women who had been affiliated with WLM in one city tended to seek out parallel organizations when they moved.

A final characteristic of the women was their high degree of economic independence. If they were not students (20 women or 40 percent), they were typically working full time for pay. At least 40 percent of the women were economically self supporting through their employment. Employment was especially characteristic of Young Socialist women — proportionately, they had fewer members attending school, and more working, than any of the other factions. Only two of the women in the sample were known by the researcher to be neither students nor employed. The place of work was the second major recruiting ground for new membership.

#### Social Characteristics as Factors Predisposing Women to Join WLM

Several of the characteristics common to the members contributed to the likelihood that many of them would experience role conflicts in their own lives. As young, middle class women, they underwent an educational experience which exposed them to role expectations and values which were inconsistent with the opportunities available to them. They were



university educated at a time when job opportunities for women are not increasing at a rate proportionate to their qualifications or numbers. Their political activism had given them a perspective from which to question seriously the values of the social system. This questioning ultimately led to a rejection of the legitimacy of that system.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, they had had experiences within the male dominated New Left which made them feel that they were not treated as equals even within that structure.<sup>2</sup> In the environment in which they moved, there was a high likelihood of encountering the sexual expectations of the "new morality", under which there was also a high likelihood of their perceiving themselves to be exploited.

In addition, they tended to possess some characteristics which gave them some freedom, not available to other women, to reject the legitimacy of existing role expectations, and to explore alternative normative systems. This freedom rested both in the objective conditions of the women's lives, and in their value systems. A low degree of commitment to existing norms provided them with a relative degree of immunity to some of the sanctions which ordinarily ensure women's compliance to the expectations attached to their position.

To begin with, they were financially independent of men. Their time and energy resources were not restricted to the full-time care of a home, husband, and children. Especially, most of them did not have the constant demands of child care as a responsibility.

Also, they were not limited by acceptance of the conventional expectation that marriage was the only valued status for women. Lack of commitment to the overriding goal of finding a marital partner freed a number of their resources for other ends. They were not motivated to exhibit the conventional "feminine" behavioral cues, which are employed



by many other young women (e.g. preoccupation with dress and cosmetics, flirtatiousness, and other attention-getting devices).

Although they tended to endorse the value of freedom of sexual expression for women, in some cases their own sexual experiences were perceived as having been exploitive and unsatisfying. As a result, some of the women declared that they "would never live with a man again"; others still hoped to enter a more satisfactory relationship with a "better" man, should they encounter one.

On the other hand, most of the women who were currently involved with a man, seemed to have a fairly stable relationship. The men, in most cases, supported (or at least did not openly oppose) their membership in WLM. However, the women who were legally married were likely to have taken that step only after a long period of living with the man in question, and then not for the more "orthodox" reasons usually associated with marriage. For example, one woman accompanied her man when he came to Canada to avoid the draft in the United States. She was refused entry at the border unless she was married to him. Another woman, after living with her man for a year, got married "because we couldn't think of any reason not to". At the same time, she maintained that a marital relationship could not necessarily be expected to be permanent, if the marriage partners had other valued commitments, with which the marriage interfered.

Although largely tending to come from middle class families of orientation, and readily admitting their middle class backgrounds, many members had adopted some elements of the lifestyle of the youth "counter-culture".<sup>3</sup> Total immersion in this life style was rare, and curbed for many by the fact that most of the non-student members were employed. However, this employment was not satisfying for most. Products of a "liberal arts" education, they were concentrated in routine, low-paying white





collar occupations (e.g. classifying books in a library, teaching at a correspondence school). Many women made remarks suggesting that they disliked their jobs, perceiving the work as alienating and meaningless. With the exception of two women who worked in specialized technological fields, they exhibited no commitment to their occupations. Their jobs merely provided the sustenance to support a relatively independent life-style. Their dress was symbolic of their dualistic life-styles. On the job, they wore the costume of the female white collar worker. Off work, they adopted the uniform of blue jeans.

At least half of the women had experimented with communal living, either currently or at some time in the past. One communal house involved women only, the rest were composed of mixed couples and singles. It seemed that the women granted higher prestige value to living extra-legally with a man, than they did to being legally married. Married women took pains to point out that their marriages had begun some time before the licence was issued. One woman always referred to "the man I live with", rather than "my husband".

Either enrolled in university or not, most women were still campus oriented. In large part, this stemmed from the tendency to past and/or present involvement in campus based political organizations such as the Vietnam Mobilization Committee, the now defunct Students' Union for Peace Action (SUPA), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and Students for a Democratic University (SDU). Other political experience has come through involvement in New Democratic Youth and/or the New Democratic Party. Their experience in these organizations has given the women a particular perspective which strongly influences their perception of the functions which they feel WLM should perform. WLM is perceived as a "political movement". The concepts and terminology of the New Left have provided,



to a large extent, the building blocks of the analysis and emergent ideology of women's liberation.

## II. THE IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF THE NEW LEFT

Since the perspectives of the New Left have had such a strong influence on the formation of ideology within WLM, it is appropriate to present a brief outline of the major tenets of New Left ideology. This background information should provide a useful reference point for comparison when the derivative ideologies of WLM are discussed later.<sup>4</sup>

1. There is a typification of North American society as unresponsive to the needs of the people. The social system is characterized as one of technocratic materialism; of bureaucratic unresponsiveness and irresponsibility in government and the economy; and of alienation of the mass of the people in the society because of their perception of their own powerlessness.

2. American foreign policy is perceived as imperialistic and aimed at maintaining colonial power to protect corporate capitalism. The independence movements of Third World peoples are perceived as struggles against American imperialism, and the acceptance by Third World peoples of a socialist alternative is perceived as beneficial to those countries which have been drained of resources by the United States.

3. The New Left rejects a "psychological" or "individualistic" explanation of the failings of the system. The system has not failed because of the mistakes of a few individuals. The institutions of the social system are perceived as being in a pathological state, and the legitimacy of these institutions is rejected. The solutions must be political and collective, not individual.



4. There is endorsement of extra-legal alternatives as the only available tactics which will effectively bring about change. As Dolbeare and Dolbeare state: "...they are revolutionary both in terms of the goals they espouse and in their rejection of 'working within the system'."<sup>5</sup>
5. Socialism is accepted as a political and economic alternative to the present system. There is eclectic borrowing of elements from many socialist models: Marx, Mao, Guevara.
6. Alternative goals and values are:
  - a) human nature is essentially good when it is not distorted by the repressive mechanisms of society,
  - b) complex social organizations should be replaced by communities with primary group characteristics, based on co-operation and brotherhood,
  - c) there should be participatory democracy — the return of institutions to the control of the people, and consensual decision-making within the community.
7. The precise tactics by which to bring about change on a concrete level, are as yet non-specific.
8. Ideology is "...constantly growing and evolving new dimensions"<sup>6</sup>, and concomitantly, "...the new left's approach has been consciously experimental and eclectic, as suits an evolving ideology."<sup>7</sup>
9. Pertinent tactical issues under debate in the New Left are:
  - a) with whom, and under what conditions, to form coalitions
  - b) the justifiability and efficiency of violence
  - c) the merits of community organizing vs. direct action
  - d) what issues will trigger perceptions of oppression and deprivation
  - e) what group or groups within society are capable of acting to initiate change in the social system.
10. There is perception that the poor and racial minorities within the society will be central agents of social change. A revolution in this





society is perceived as part of a worldwide revolutionary movement led by the Third World.

11. The New Left is primarily a youth movement which is centered in universities and which is avowedly Marxist, yet is almost totally isolated from the working class.

12. Any radical analysis must be based on one's own experience of oppression. Hence, revolutionary change is perceived as coming from the grass roots. New Left analysis grows out of the specific issues faced by youth, e.g. the university, the Vietnam war. In the same way, the analysis of the system by radical blacks has been based on the black experience in the United States. The New Left maintains that a radical analysis of the system from the perspective of the poor, must be made by the poor on the basis of the experience of the poor within the system.

13. Concomitant with the growth of political radicalism, there has emerged a cultural radicalism — the growth of youth oriented counterculture.

Both were influenced by the same stimuli for their inception and growth.

14. The cultural and political movements are interlocked. The developing ideology has evolved further in terms of its cultural aspects, than it has in its political aspects. The alternative life style is specific and total. The political ideology is evolved at a theoretical level, but not on a specific tactical level. However, "Because the contraculture is a self-conscious rejection of the older generation, adhering to this way of life becomes a political and even revolutionary action in itself."<sup>8</sup>

Because of their rejection of the values of the dominant system, "This is the reason that their life style itself, apart from any concrete political action, is perceived as threatening to the dominant culture."<sup>9</sup> The revolution thus becomes process — a means as well as a goal, experienced through living.



15. Negative reactions from the dominant culture force cultural deviants into more direct political activism, in an attempt at self-preservation of their chosen life style.<sup>10</sup>

16. The Canadian New Left is strongly influenced by its counterpart in the United States. It has adopted the ideology formulated in the United States with few adaptations to the Canadian situation, with the result that issues such as the Vietnam war have been given greater priority than specifically Canadian issues, such as American economic and cultural imperialism in Canada.<sup>11</sup>

### III. HISTORY OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

#### AS AN OFFSHOOT OF THE NEW LEFT

WLM had initially been formed in Edmonton in 1968, as an offshoot from the campus based Students for a Democratic University. The inception of WLM in the city paralleled the birth of the movement throughout North America as a spin-off from the New Left during 1967 and 1968. The immediate reason for the formation of WLM appeared to be much the same in every centre, that is, the growing perception by women in the New Left that they were experiencing discrimination from within that movement.

Several women from within WLM have documented its emergence from the New Left. Marlene Dixon, in an article discussing the first growth of WLM, stated:

The women's movement is a product of the experience of many hundreds of young women in the civil rights movement and in the urban white organizing undertaken by white, radical youth after the collapse of the civil rights movement. Young women and girls risked their lives in the struggle to create a just and humane society. They were beaten in demonstrations, they were arrested, and they were often sexually mistreated. They served time in jail, staffed the freedom houses, cranked the mimeograph machines, washed the dishes, loved the men, and cared for the children. Only to discover themselves absent from the steering committees, silent during meetings, and



ridiculed when they protested that they worked and risked their lives in organizations in which they had little power to make decisions. The young women learned that in a freedom struggle, they were not free.

Out of this contradiction, the women's liberation movement was born. At first, women asked only that they be permitted to participate in "participatory" democracy. This very reasonable and just request was laughed down by the young men, and so women learned at last just what male chauvinism must mean for their own movement.<sup>12</sup>

Thus WLM grew from the responses of the women within the New Left to the position in which they saw themselves, taking its direction from the political experiences which the women had undergone, and from the political analyses which they understood and applied to their own situation. In the words of Linda Seese:

We began...to form Feminine Caucuses within the various New Left organizations. We had heard the cry of the black movement to deal with our own oppression. We began to throw off the Protestant ethnic (sic?) heritage of assumptions that all women are expected to sacrifice all their lives, and especially in the movement. Women began to work for their own freedom.<sup>13</sup>

According to an account of the early stages of the movement made by Cellestine Ware<sup>14</sup>, the response of the men in the New Left ranged from insults and ridicule (the radical male audience at a New York demonstration protesting Nixon's inauguration met the speech of a women's liberationist with the call, "Take her off the stage and fuck her!"), to patronizing paternalism — giving the women advice as to how they could best "organize" themselves, and doing their analyses for them.

The women's reaction was to begin forming women's liberation groups which were completely independent of New Left organizations. Men were barred from participation in these groups. There were two reasons for this decision. Since the men exhibited a strong tendency to control and direct meetings<sup>15</sup>, the women felt that, only without men present would they have the freedom to develop their own organizational skills and an





understanding of the sources of their own oppression, stemming from an analysis of their own experience. Also, women tended to be hesitant about discussing their personal experiences of oppression in the presence of the men, because they were afraid of the punishing responses of the men, who continually denied the validity of their statements.<sup>16</sup> In the words of Heather Dean:

Women should undergo this process of self-examination with each other, but away from men...women must fortify themselves against the punishment of the male chauvinist and the paternalism of the male liberal. Once women have shared the process of self-discovery and the experience of independent decision-making, they are ready for the real struggle...<sup>17</sup>

The first analogy used by WLM writers was that of women to blacks. This analogy was expressed by Beverly Jones: "There is an almost exact parallel between the role of women and the role of black people in this society. Together they constitute the great maintenance force sustaining the white American male."<sup>18</sup>

In separating themselves from the male dominated New Left, and setting up autonomous organizations, they consciously followed the earlier example of radical blacks, who had expelled whites from their organizations. Black power meant black control, and an analysis drawn from the experience and needs of black people. Blacks reasoned that a movement to free black people could succeed only on this basis, and not through the imposition of solutions by whites, who could not hope to fully understand the oppression of black people, and who would deny their own part in perpetuating that oppression. Beverly Jones, speaking in 1968, commented:

One of the best things that ever happened to black militants happened when they got hounded out of the stars-and-stripes, white-controlled civil rights movement, when they started fighting for blacks instead of the American Dream. The best thing that ever happened to potential white radicals in civil rights happened when they got thrown out by SNCC and were forced to face their own oppression in their own world.



When they started fighting for control of the universities, against the draft, the war, and the business order. And the best thing that may yet happen to potentially radical young women is that they will be driven out of both of these groups. That they will be forced to stop fighting for the "movement" and start fighting primarily for the liberation and independence of women.<sup>19</sup>

From such beginnings, WLM has grown to its present size and form.

#### IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN EDMONTON

"Women's Liberation" is a blanket term which covers distinguishable subgroups in Edmonton, as it does throughout the movement.

##### The Parent Group

When the researcher began observations for the study in June 1970, there was one recognized formal WLM organization in the city. Although WLM had been in existence in the city since 1968, it had not operated continually, but had formed and dissolved several times. The present organization, which will be termed the Parent Group, had begun in January 1970.

Base of operation. In January, the organization was based on the university campus. In the spring, the Parent Group had moved off campus, and rented an office in the business and commercial district of the city. This was done because the existing membership felt that WLM was limiting its membership too severely to campus women, and should attempt to attract more women from outside the university setting. The move was unsuccessful in that respect, since most women active in the movement continued to be either university students, or recent graduates who maintained ties with the university, being very much "university oriented" in terms of their outlook and contacts.



The tendency to draw membership from campus was still encouraged partly because WLM activities continued to be publicized almost exclusively through the student newspaper, through an information booth set up on campus during freshman introductory week, and through a ten week educational series held in the evenings on campus in the fall of 1970. Almost no effort was made to draw in membership through publicity of meeting times, place, and activities in off-campus locations.

Structure of meetings. Business meetings were held once a week, in the evening. The meetings were closed to men. The weekly meetings tended to be very formal. Their main purpose was entirely practical: 1) to plan the details, the "what, where, when and how" of future activities and to secure volunteers to do the work; and 2) to present brief reports on the past activities of volunteers, and of the several permanent committees which had been set up to perform ongoing functions (e.g. the abortion referral service). Reports consisted of brief summaries concerning an event, sometimes accompanied by the reporter's opinion on the success or failure of the activity.

Beyond the most superficial level, there was no attempt at critical analyses of actions and projects, either before or after they had taken place. For example, one of the major projects of the year was the educational series held on campus. Many women were disappointed in the series, and considered it a failure. Although there had been an attendance of seventy or eighty women at the first educational, and discussion had lasted until nearly eleven o'clock in the evening, the following weeks found attendance and interested discussion steadily declining. The final session, set up to discuss strategy, drew only women who were already involved in WLM.





There was very little discussion in the meetings over the reasons for the failure of the series, beyond noting the fairly obvious ones of poor publicity, and of presentations which were too formal and lacking in innovations which would involve the audience. The series was ostensibly geared to increasing the membership of WLM, and it did fail in this. However, there was no discussion of why women did not join the organization.

The researcher had the opportunity to talk with some of the women who attended the educationals, and from the remarks which they made, it appeared that two factors were operating to inhibit their motivation to join. First, they were afraid. Although they agreed with all the evidence cited in the presentations, and were able to relate that evidence to their own experience, they were afraid to be "labelled" by family, friends, and the general public as "man-hating, bra-burning radicals", an image which a hostile mass media had done much to confer on WLM.<sup>20</sup> They knew that participation in WLM would threaten their relationships with significant others, both male and female. These problems were very serious, in their perception, and they had no mechanisms whereby they could cope with such difficulties, except to avoid involvement with WLM. Although women in the movement acknowledge that other women often feel "threatened" by what they say, in this case they appeared not to have discussed the problem with the women who came to the series, nor to have attempted to develop any means by which they might help other women overcome the problem. This behavior seems to be related to the inability which the members displayed many times, to take the roles of other women, and to attempt interaction on a primary group level with them. The Rap Group appeared to be the only faction which attempted to develop alternatives for women on a personal level, and that with limited success.<sup>21</sup>



Second, some of the women were sufficiently interested to express an interest in joining the movement, but they wished to become involved in an organization which they perceived as working to accomplish specific, concrete goals. The presentations at the educationals offered them nothing to do. When they asked what could be done, the response was often that they should organize programs around the issues in which they were interested — to women who might never have organized anything in their lives, and who did not perceive themselves as capable of performing such a task. At the educationals, they remained the passive recipients of information, rather than participants in learning how to formulate tactics and implement changes. The presentations offered descriptions of women's position as it exists, but offered no explicit tactics by which solutions could be imposed. Although at least 70 women put their names on a WLM mailing list during the series, no more than two or three of the women contacted in the series ever came to meetings at the downtown office.

Membership. The membership of the Parent Group consisted of approximately 12 regular members, who attended meetings fairly consistently. This number remained stable during the period of observation, although the personnel underwent some change. As noted earlier, high geographical mobility partially accounted for shifting membership during the year — especially of regular members. Four women from the core group moved from the city during the period of observation, to be replaced by four others. The fairly consistent number of members over time might be considered an indication that the structure of the group could not accommodate a larger number of members.<sup>22</sup>

Besides the core group of regular members in the Parent Group, there was an outer circle of perhaps 12 other women attached to the organization.



These women, who could be termed sympathizers, were usually acquaintances of regulars. They came to meetings only sporadically, but might work within the committee structures, or could be called upon to work on short-term projects or to support actions initiated by the core group. The personnel in this membership also shifted considerably during the year, some women leaving the city, some simply dropping out, to be replaced by others.

Attendance at weekly meetings typically included most of the regular members, a few of the sympathizers, and from one to four outsiders, or new women attending their first meeting.

Recruitment patterns. As noted earlier, the places of recruitment were the campus and the place of work. During the period of the study, approximately 10 new women entered the Parent Group, some becoming regular members, others becoming sympathizers. These women typically attended their first meeting on invitation of a member whom they knew, or else met a member at the meeting who was already an acquaintance. This personal contact and acknowledgement of the newcomer by already existing members seemed to be an important factor in determining whether or not the newcomer would remain as a member. If she was personally acquainted with at least one of the regular members, she was more likely to remain in the group than if she came as a stranger.

Other new women, attending their first meeting, were likely to have heard of the organization through some form of WLM publicity: the information booth on campus in freshman introduction week, WLM guest speakers on radio and television programs and in university classrooms, or the educational series on campus. These women usually knew none of the regular members. They were, for the most part, ignored. They were





ignorant of the meaning of WLM jargon, plans for projects, and reports. If they asked for an explanation, it was often grudgingly given by the regulars, who seemed to resent repeatedly explaining what was, to them, obvious.

A suggestion was made that new women undergo a series of "orientation sessions" before they came to meetings, so that they would know what was going on, but the suggestion was never implemented. Disagreement arose over the content of the orientation sessions — would they merely supply information about projects and terms used in WLM, or would they take the form of a more thorough indoctrination into the ideology of WLM, and if so, which ideology? Also, when the question arose over willingness of members to hold the sessions, no-one appeared willing to give up her time to do so.

During the period of the study, at least 30 women came to one or two meetings downtown, and never returned. The reasons for their failure to become involved could not be specifically determined, but several reasons could be suggested: 1) fear of negative reactions from friends and relatives outside WLM, 2) the failure of WLM to offer specific programs which met the needs of the women, 3) the almost total lack of interest in and acceptance of them displayed by the regular members, 4) recognition by some of the women of the political bickering and factionalism that was manifested almost to the exclusion of any other activity at some meetings, 5) fear of socialism, and 6) a few women seemed to attend a meeting as a joke or diversion.

The social characteristics of the membership, discussed earlier, seemed to exert a strong influence on the type of woman who might decide (or who was encouraged) to remain as a core member or sympathizer in the group. A self-selection process was operating, and several biases tended



to restrict membership to the type of woman exhibiting the characteristics discussed earlier.

There was a definite age bias. Only 4 or 5 women over the age of 30 ever attended a meeting, and none of them became regular members or sympathizers. One woman in her forties said self-deprecatingly "I'm only a housewife", and openly expressed discomfort at being in a group of "young women". This concentration in age of women in their twenties was accompanied by a lack of interest among the membership in the problems faced by the older women.

There was also a class bias. Although some members expressed interest in the oppression of working class women, there were no working class, or lower class, women in the group. One attempt had been made to contact them through a meeting on working women, but the meeting had brought no response. Before the period of the study, a few of the members had gone to a meeting of welfare women, and had been asked not to come back, since the welfare women felt intimidated by the presence of the "middle class college girls". Several of the members openly stated that they were unable to "relate" to working class women — that on occasion they had tried and had been unable to sustain a conversation with such women, nor to maintain an interest and understanding of the lives of working class women.

On the other hand, many of the regular members were making a deliberate effort to lose their middle class origins through the adoption of counterculture life styles, as discussed earlier. Hence, they also found it difficult to "relate" to women who had not renounced their middle class life style and value system. Women who dressed conventionally-(i.e. in accordance with the middle class standards of "femininity") did not remain long with WLM. Since none of the regulars were housewives, and few had to cope with children, the specific problems faced by the housewife and



mother were also largely ignored. However, most of the WLM communications continued to be directed to middle class women, for example, through the means of the campus educationals.

Other groups, such as Native women and unwed mothers, which were distinctly perceived as oppressed by WLM, were not contacted. Although there was a need in the city for temporary homes where unmarried women might live during their pregnancies, the members of WLM evinced no interest in the problems of illegitimacy -- other than their involvement in the issue of abortion. They made no attempt to contact MOVE, an organization which was set up to help unwed mothers cope with their problems, because they claimed that MOVE was dominated by a Catholic women's association.

Much the same attitude was adopted towards organizations for Native women. The Native women's VOW was closed to white women. However, there was a Women's Shelter in the city which badly needed volunteer workers, and whose clientele was composed largely of transient Native women. Although this need had been brought to the attention of WLM several times, by one of its own members, the opportunity for involvement in this project was not utilized. The reason given was that the Shelter was "too much under the control of church women", and that they would not be able to influence the women as they wished.

Factionalism. The factionalism, which was apparent from the outset of the study, also influenced the composition of the membership. The first faction to emerge consisted of members of the local branch of Young Socialists/League for Socialist Action (YS/LSA). Four members of the "Trots" (an abbreviated form of Trotskyists), as they were termed by non-YS women, were regular members of WLM. Other supporters appeared sporadically at





meetings. These women formed a small, cohesive unit, which appeared to have joined WLM as a bloc in order to advocate the political ideology of their own national organization, as the position which should be adopted by WLM. Conflict between YS and the rest of the Parent Group was based on ideological differences<sup>23</sup>, which manifested themselves in many meetings by debates over the correct tactics to be used in carrying out any programme or action under discussion.

Although the remainder of the Parent Group refused to accept the ideology of YS, they did not have a clearly articulated ideology with which to effectively guide the organization. Unlike YS, they did not place the activities of WLM in the perspective of an encompassing ideology which would dictate the goals for the movement, and the strategy most appropriate for the attainment of those goals. As one member put it, "We just seem to do things because it's "the thing" that Women's Liberation is doing everywhere. We don't know why." Throughout the fall of 1970, it became increasingly apparent that such a lack of ideology could not continue, if the organization itself were to remain viable.

In November, two additional subgroups or factions emerged within the Parent Group. H and K, two of the influential members of the Parent Group, began to advocate that WLM explore socialism as an ideology by which to guide itself, with a view to having WLM openly declare itself a revolutionary socialist movement. Neither YS nor the majority of the rest of the members would accept this alternative, with the result that several women formed a Socialist Women's Caucus (SWC), which first carried on separate meetings within the larger organizational framework, then separated itself completely from the Parent Group. The split took place amid a great deal of hostility among the factions<sup>24</sup>, and generated further hostility during the remainder of the period of the study.



The third subgroup within the Parent Group had no formally designated label, but it might be termed the Silent Majority with some accuracy. These women continued to have no articulated political ideology themselves, although they were unwilling to accept either that of YS or the SWC. Rather than being oriented to theorizing about the strategy upon which WLM should base its actions, they tended to be oriented to actively working on specific projects.<sup>25</sup>

As might be expected, the differences in ideology were reinforced by the existence of friendship bonds within each faction. The YS women appeared to have strong primary bonds. Outside WLM, they worked co-operatively together on other YS projects, and pursued leisure activities with each other and male members of YS. The two women who initiated the SWC also appeared to be good friends, visiting each other and keeping informed of each other's activities. This relationship lasted throughout the period of the study, but appeared to have suffered a strain during the summer months of 1971.<sup>26</sup> The members of the Silent Majority developed friendship bonds through their co-operative work on committees. With a few exceptions, friendship cliques existed within the groups delimited by ideological beliefs. This factor served to exaggerate the factionalism, and to permit the unchecked development of personal animosities between individual members of different factions.

Beyond these ideologically reinforced friendship cliques, the relationships among the members of the Parent Group were secondary in nature. Unless they were personal friends, women did not contact each other between business meetings, unless, and only on rare occasions, for a WLM purpose (e.g. to paint posters and signs for a demonstration). There was little informal personal conversation during meetings. Regular



members often complained that they felt isolated from each other — as though they were "really not part of a group". Lack of personal commitment to each other in the organization was perceived as a problem, yet few attempts were made to achieve better relationships throughout the core group of regulars, and to extend them to the sympathizers and newcomers. Although many of the regular members were long acquaintances, few could be termed friends.

Committee structures. At the time of the inception of the study, the Parent Group contained one standing committee — an abortion referral service. The purpose of the service was to refer women wanting abortions to co-operative doctors either in the city, or in the United States.<sup>27</sup> The women working on this committee were mostly Silent Majority sympathizers, who rarely attended meetings.

At a local conference on November 1, 1970, several new committees were formed. Volunteer members set up a guerrilla theatre group; a study group to read and analyse literature from the perspective of WLM; a committee on kindergarten and day care; a committee to write and distribute a local monthly newsletter; and a media committee which was to act as a liaison with other organizations wanting guest speakers from WLM.

However, with the exception of the newsletter committee, these new structures were short-lived. The newsletter committee and the abortion referral service continued to function until April 1971, when the Parent Group gave up its downtown office. At this time, the Parent Group virtually dissolved for the summer months, and these two projects dissolved with it.

One of the major reasons for the survival of the newsletter and abortion committees was that they both had an easily definable, concrete





task to perform. Also, the women working on both committees were Silent Majority women. In the case of the abortion committee, they were committed to working for that particular issue. In the case of the newsletter committee, they became committed to working with each other as friends in a co-operative effort. The kindergarten and day care committee, largely composed of the same women as in the newsletter committee, ceased to function primarily because there were other organizations in the city which were much better equipped in terms of information, dedicated membership (parents), and lobbying power, to be effective sponsors of such a project. The WLM women recognized this and ceased their activity in the area. The other committees failed, on the other hand, because their members failed to define precisely and adequately what the nature of their functions should be, and failed to develop a programme by which these functions could be performed. This failure seemed related to the fact that the committees were composed of members of the differing ideological factions, rather than being homogeneous.

Leadership. Although the position of co-ordinator existed within the structure of the group, it coincided only partially with the leadership of the group.

There was a task co-ordinator for each project committee. This position remained stable in the case of permanent committees such as the abortion referral service. In addition, when a short-term project or action was planned, a co-ordinator took charge of the project, directing the work of the volunteers on the committee. All committees were staffed by volunteers, who informally stated their preference to take charge of a project or committee in which they had a special interest. This was a procedure followed in all cases, rather than the volunteers or the group



as a whole nominating candidates and voting to elect co-ordinators.

There was, in addition to these positions, a permanent central co-ordinator for the group as a whole. This position was also filled by a volunteer, rather than by an elected officer. The tasks of this central co-ordinator were basically: 1) to chair meetings, 2) to act as liaison with the task co-ordinators of the various committees and projects, 3) to act as a task co-ordinator of a project on occasion, and 4) to act as liaison between the Parent Group and the larger society.

H, the central co-ordinator, although wielding a degree of personal influence in the group, could not be termed its leader. Indeed, it might be said that the Parent Group had no leader, but several of the regular members were more influential than the rank and file. Women such as H, K, L, N, and G could be termed influential, since they often controlled the context and direction which the meetings took, through the expression of their opinions, their acceptance of responsibility for co-ordinating projects, and their control of information passing from within the group to outside contacts, and vice versa. Control of information played a large part in the positions of influence which these women had.<sup>28</sup>

A major reason for the lack of an acknowledged leader lay in the fact that the influential members were divided among the three conflicting factions in the Parent Group. L and N belonged to YS, H and K set up the SWC, G aligned herself with the Silent Majority. Under these conditions, no-one had a mandate of leadership from the Parent Group as a whole — either by virtue of the position of central co-ordinator, nor by the force of personality, because of the intervening factor of conflicting ideology.

Contacts with the larger society. The primary point of contact between the Parent Group and the public, was through the medium of speaking



engagements. Members of WLM accepted invitations throughout the year to speak on television and radio programs, at high school and university classrooms, and to women's groups. The purpose of these speaking engagements was to attempt to educate the public about WLM, and to correct the faulty image which the members felt the mass media gave them.

Although Silent Majority women were overrepresented on working committees and actions calling for volunteer support, such as demonstrations, they rarely undertook speaking engagements. These fell to the more articulate, politically oriented "influentials" in YS and the SWC.

The women who accepted the task of speaking outside WLM made most of the "contacts" with others outside WLM, with media people and those in social service organizations. Their position was enhanced twofold. They had the opportunity to become more experienced at public speaking, hence more sure of themselves, and hence more likely to volunteer for such tasks. They were labelled as leaders by people outside the movement, and it was with them that these people interacted. They therefore controlled the flow of information coming from outside sources into the group, and from WLM to the publics with which they came in contact. It was partly because of this information control that, when the SWC dissociated itself from the Parent Group, and with the increase in hostility towards YS, the Silent Majority ceased to function, except for the abortion and newsletter committees.

The second point of contact between WLM and the public was through the medium of demonstrations or "direct actions". Previous to the time of the study, Edmonton WLM took part in the Abortion Caravan of the spring of 1970. Four demonstrations took place during the period of the study. The first, on August 25, 1970, was a picket of the Edmonton Journal, in protest of the segregation of help-wanted advertisements into





male and female sections. This demonstration was a gesture in support of the massive demonstrations on Women's Day in the United States on August 26. Perhaps 20 women took part, and the action was publicized by radio, television, and the Journal. The second, on November 16, 1970, picketed the Royal Canadian Legion to protest the legionnaires' hiring of a stripper for their entertainment. The picket was composed of only 6 women, and there was no media publicity of the incident, but the legionnaires felt sufficiently harassed and/or outraged to call in police to attempt to remove the women. The last two demonstrations, on February 8 and 13, 1971, were both in connection with the Canada-wide abortion campaign taking place at that time. These demonstrations are discussed more fully in Chapter V, pages 174-175.

The first purpose of the demonstrations seemed to be to gain public attention and support, primarily of other women, through publicizing issues which WLM considered important. However, the membership of WLM did not appear able to assess the degree to which they influenced public opinion either favorably or unfavorably through the tactic of demonstrations.

The second purpose was to attract other women to participate in the movement. Although a few non-WLM women joined the demonstrations in connection with the abortion campaign, they did not join WLM subsequently. The utility of demonstrations remained debated throughout the year, with YS being strong advocates of their use, especially in connection with the issue of abortion, and the remainder of the parent group being doubtful of their value.

#### The Rap Group

In August of 1970, a second, autonomous WLM organization was formed in Edmonton, which will be termed the Rap Group. This group had had no



previous affiliation with the Parent Group. It was not a splinter group such as the SWC, but had formed separately from the Parent Group, as an independent organization.

Base of operation. Two women, A and B, operated this group from their home, which they designated a "Women's House". They declared the house open on a 24 hour a day basis, where women were welcome to come and "rap" or talk, and have "free space" or be in a setting where they were not constrained to play the "feminine role". Shortly after its inception, A and B declared the house completely off limits to men.

Structure of the meetings. The two Rap Group organizers, A and B, instituted "rap sessions" or discussion groups, on a regular basis, once a week, in the evening. As A emphatically stated, the purpose of the rap sessions was not to act as a sensitivity group, but rather to act as a "consciousness-raising experience". The position and problems of the individual members of the discussion groups were to be analysed by the group as a whole. Through recognizing that their problems were not "individual" (i.e. psychological), but "social and political" (i.e determined by factors outside themselves), they would come to understand the real sources of their oppression, and be able to formulate solutions to that oppression. By discussing their own lives, values and beliefs, and by listening to others, they would come to find that their problems were not "unique", that they were not "abnormal", but had common problems which stemmed from the social system in which they were placed.

The usual pattern for sessions was for either A or B to suggest a topic for discussion at the outset of the session. There was no pressure on other women to speak; some said little or nothing for an entire session, others used the session as an opportunity to engage in extended



monologues outlining their own personal experience. The suggested topics tended to be used as jumping off points, or invitations to relate to the individual experiences of the women.

There were no committee structures in the Rap Group as there were in the Parent Group. The central structure of the organization consisted of the rap sessions.

Membership. There were from 5 to 12 women present at each session. When approximately 8 women became regular attenders in October, the sessions became closed to others outside this core group. New women and sporadic attenders were channelled into a second session on another night of the week. This allowed the members of the closed session to follow a theme of discussion from week to week, rather than covering the same or discontinuous topics every week for the benefit of new members. The open sessions also gathered an attendance of from 5 to 12 women every week, some of whom attended fairly regularly, others attending only one or two sessions.

Leadership. A and B were the acknowledged leaders of the Rap Group, and exerted strong control over the context and direction of discussion in the sessions. During the discussions, their position of leadership was central — communications from the other women were usually directed at them, and the women often phrased their statements in forms which invited opinions, analyses, and/or approval from A and B. The perceptions which these two women had of their role as leaders included the understanding that they had the expertise to supply the answers to the voiced needs of the other women. As B said to C, who was organizing a third rap session, "You are the leader. You can't try to pretend that you don't know more than they do."





A factor enhancing the leadership position of A and B within the Rap Group was their base of operation. They ran the rap sessions in their own home, a factor which could be said to put them at a "territorial" advantage. Other women were always subtly aware that they were guests in the house of A and B. If they disagreed with what was said or done, ultimately their least awkward alternative was to leave the situation, rather than argue vehemently with what were, in a sense, their hostesses. On the other hand, in the neutral arena of the downtown office, all of the factions were free to compete without that kind of constraint.

Recruitment patterns. By January of 1971, C, D, and E, who had all been regular members of the Rap Group, each began sessions of their own, thus expanding the number of sessions from two to five; concomitantly enlarging the membership and sphere of influence of the Rap Group. All five of the Rap Group leaders maintained close ties, but A and B retained their positions of strongest influence within the Rap Group.

The membership of the Rap Group was recruited from the campus and the place of work, as was that of the Parent Group. The difference in recruitment between the two groups lay in the conscious attempt on the part of the Rap Group leaders to recruit women selectively on a personal basis, as opposed to the more haphazard, unconscious selectivity of the Parent Group. Women almost invariably attended rap sessions on personal invitation. When each of the five rap sessions was being formed, the membership was initially composed of women whom the Rap Group leaders had previously known or at least met, and who had been invited by the leaders to participate in the sessions. These women might subsequently invite their own friends and acquaintances to attend. It was extremely rare for a total stranger to appear at a meeting. Such selectivity served two



functions: it gave each new member a personalized orientation to the group, and it acted as a control mechanism on the type of women selected by the leaders as potential members.

Unlike the Parent Group, there were no factional splits within the Rap Group. Although there was ideological diversity within the Rap Group<sup>29</sup>, there seemed to be no ideological competition. A and B, and the ideology they espoused, remained clearly dominant. Those women who disagreed with their position, simply ceased attending the rap sessions. B remarked to the researcher in the spring of 1971 that she had been rather disappointed that some women had only attended one session, then had criticized the Rap Group to other women, without voicing their criticism directly to A and B.<sup>30</sup> The researcher felt that this particular response from the women resulted from the advantage A and B held with regard to their base of operation, and from the rigidity with which A and B held their views. However, although at least five women known to the researcher did cease attending the rap sessions, the expansion of the Rap Group from one to five separate sessions within a period of six months indicated its success in drawing and retaining membership relative to the Parent Group.

Contacts with the larger society. The Rap Group did not focus any of its activities on contacts with the larger society. It remained inwardly oriented, concentrating on the rap sessions as its major focus. Although A took part in several radio and newspaper interviews, the members of the Rap Group did not carry out public speaking engagements as part of its interests. Similarly, although A and B took part in the demonstration at the Legion, and the Rap Group members supported the two abortion demonstrations in February 1971, the Rap Group did not take any



part in working in the abortion campaign. It did take charge of the arrangements for Edmonton WLM's participation in the international WLM conference in Vancouver in April 1971, after the almost total dissolution of the Parent Group. This opportunity was used to make contact with the local Voice of Women. However, the Rap Group did not appear interested in public proselytizing, but in concentrating intensively on the internal development of small groups at a non-publicized level.

#### Relationship Between the Parent Group and the Rap Group

Both groups acknowledged the existence of the other. Initially, the Parent Group tended to regard the Rap Group as an organization peripheral to WLM. The Rap Group regarded itself, however, as a central part of WLM, and this perception was increasingly adopted by the members of the Parent Group as the latter disintegrated from within.

A and B made it known from the inception of the Rap Group that they intended to maintain their organization on a basis independent of the Parent Group, although they also wished to be kept informed of the actions of the Parent Group, and to be included in its plans. At the local conference on November 1, which took in both major branches of WLM in Edmonton, B suggested that both organizations amalgamate, at least to the extent of working co-operatively on issues of common interest to both groups. However, although the Rap Group became formally affiliated with the Parent Group, the ties between them remained tenuous. The ideology and tactics of the two groups were too dissimilar to make much effective co-operation possible between them.

Although several women from the Parent Group attended a rap session or two, they did not tend to become regular members. Only the Rap Group leaders attended meetings of the Parent Group, and at that, only





on occasion. Communications were thus limited between the two groups. The Rap Group leaders maintained close control over the information which their membership obtained about the Parent Group, for they were the major link between the two groups. Although conferences were open to everyone, again only the rap leaders attended, except when the conferences were held in the Women's House. The Rap Group did not take part in activities instigated by the Parent Group, although they did invite women from the Parent Group to participate in activities which they initiated.

The leaders of the Rap Group maintained communication linkages with the leaders of the SWC, and with the regular members of the Silent Majority. During the period of the split between the two latter groups, they even played the role of mediator between them, at least to the extent of providing a listening ear to the accusations which each side made concerning the other. Contact between the Rap Group and YS was almost non-existent until April of 1971, because YS expressed strong hostility to the Rap Group and its ideology until that time.

## V. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This chapter has focused on an introduction to the sample in the study. The women in the sample were found to have certain homogeneous characteristics. They were predominantly young (average age 25), university educated, of a middle class family background, self-supporting, childless. They tended to have adopted some of the elements of the countercultural life style and the political ideology of the New Left, having taken part in campus based political activist organizations. These characteristics might be considered as predisposing them to join a movement such as WLM, since they tended to 1) be in positions where they would



be highly likely to be exposed to role conflicts, and 2) possess some characteristics, both in the objective conditions of their lives, and in their value systems, which gave them relative immunity from effective penalization for noncompliance with the existing expectations of the sex role relationship, and which allowed them to explore alternative normative systems.

A brief outline of the origins of WLM was presented, tracing it as a movement growing out of the New Left in the late 1960's. This was followed by a discussion of the structure of the WLM organization in Edmonton. The major factor discussed was the existence of four distinct sub-groups or factions within WLM, these factions delimited by ideological differences.

In the next chapter, the discussion will centre on the four factions, particularly in terms of comparative analysis of their divergent ideologies. These ideologies, and the degree of integration of the ideologies with the behavior of the respective factions, will be the indicators for determining the responses of the members of WLM in Edmonton to their status as women.



Footnotes: Chapter IV

1. See discussion of New Left ideology, pp. 127-129.
2. See discussion of the history of WLM, pp. 130-133.
3. Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counterculture: Reflecting on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition (New York: Anchor Books, 1968).
4. The information on the ideology of the New Left was gathered from several sources:

Michael E. Brown, "The Condemnation and Persecution of Hippies", Total Institutions ed. Samuel E. Wallace (Transaction Inc., dist. Aldine Pub. Co., 1971), pp. 165-195.

Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Patricia Dolbeare, American Ideologies: The Competing Political Beliefs of the 1970's (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1971), Ch. 6.

James Laxer, "The Americanization of the Canadian Student Movement", Close the 49th Parallel etc.: The Americanization of Canada, ed. Ian Lumsden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 275-286.

Staughton Lynd, "The New Left", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (vol. 382, March 1969), pp. 64-72.

Marbara C. Myerhoff, "The Revolution as a Trip: Symbol and Paradox", The Annals (vol. 395, May 1971), pp. 105-116.

James P. O'Brien, "The Development of the New Left", The Annals (vol. 395, May 1971), pp. 15-25.

Theodore Roszak, *passim*.

5. Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Patricia Dolbeare, *op.cit.*, p. 172.
6. Ibid., p. 171.
7. Ibid., p. 172.
8. Barbara G. Myerhoff, *op.cit.*, p. 111.
9. Ibid., p. 111.
10. Michael E. Brown, *passim*.
11. James Laxer, *passim*.
12. Marlene Dixon, "-----", Motive, ed. J.B. Stiles (vol. XXIX, no. 6 & 7, March/April 1969), p. 21.





cf. Carol Hanisch, "Hard Knocks: Working in a Mixed (Male-Female) Movement Group", Notes From the Second Year, eds. Shulamith Firestone & Anne Koedt (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), pp. 59-63.

cf. Marge Piercy, "The Grand Coolie Dam". Originally published in Leviathan (November, 1969), reprinted in pamphlet form by the New England Free Press, Boston, Massachusetts.

13. Linda Seese, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby — Women in the Movement", Motive, ed. J.B. Stiles (vol. XXIX, no. 6 & 7, March/April 1969), p. 70.

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20. Erving Goffman, Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

21. See discussion of the Feminists, Chapter V, pp. 217-249.

22. Georg Simmel, Two Essays: Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations (New York: The Free Press, 1955).

23. See discussion of YS/LSA in Chapter V, pp. 167-185.

24. See discussion of the Socialist Women's Caucus in Chapter V, pp. 186-216.

25. See discussion of the Silent Majority in Chapter V, pp. 249-262.

26. See discussion of the Socialist Women's Caucus in Chapter V, pp. 208-209.

27. See discussion of the abortion referral service in Chapter V, pp. 252-257, pp. 258-259.



28. See discussion of contacts between the Parent Group and the larger society, Chapter IV, pp. 145-147.
29. See discussion of the Feminists in Chapter V, p.236-237.
30. See discussion of the Feminists in Chapter V, pp.241-242.



## CHAPTER V

### THE IDEOLOGIES OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Out of the participant observation study of the WLM group in Edmonton, three interrelated themes emerged. The first, and central theme, was that of the development of ideology within WLM. The development of ideology is a necessary step in the growth of any movement.<sup>1</sup> Ideology provides a frame of reference for interpreting the problem situation which the members of a movement perceive as confronting them. It defines the problem; identifies the causes of the problem; and prescribes relevant tactics by the use of which the problem may be solved. It defines the alternative lines of action which are perceived by the adherents as available to them in their attempt to implement their goal. The ideology of a social movement is the embodiment of its value system -- its blueprint for the guidance of the membership. In a sense, it provides the justification or rationale for the existence of the movement. It also provides a statement of the response of its adherents to their perceived situation in life. As such, the analysis of ideology provides a large part of the answer to the question presented in this thesis -- that of determining the type(s) of response made by the Women's Liberation Movement to the subordinate status of women.

A major influence on the formation of ideology is the experience of its proponents.<sup>2</sup> The definitions formed of situations are shaped by the past and present experiences of the actors in those situations. Throughout the period of observation, it was evident that the social characteristics and the experiences of the membership exerted a strong





influence on the development and direction of the ideologies formulated. The second theme, then, was that the ideologies which were developing, were shaped by the life experiences of the members. The homogeneous social characteristics typical of the membership, and their relationship to the life experiences and expectations of the membership, were discussed in Chapter IV, and will also have application in the present chapter.

The third theme, which was prominent in WLM in Edmonton, was that of internal conflict. Not one, but several ideologies had been developed, and were still in the process of evolving; suggesting that not one, but several types of response were also occurring. These explanatory ideologies were each based on different assumptions and perceptions concerning the causes of women's subordinate status. The differences led to emphasis on differing tactics as the most efficient and effective means of solving the problem. Each ideology had its adherents, leading to the formation of conflicting factions within the movement. Accordingly, most of the resources of the movement were directed inwards towards factional disputes, rather than outwards, to the larger society.

This chapter will be concerned with a comparative analysis of the differing ideologies expressed by the four subgroups or factions found in WLM in Edmonton. It will begin with a discussion of the term "oppression", as that term is used within WLM to define the problem situation as it is perceived by the movement members. Next, the sources of female "oppression" will be discussed, as they are defined within the movement. Each faction will then be discussed with reference to its preferred goal and its perceived available alternatives for attaining that goal, as these are expressed through its ideology.



## I. THE PROBLEM: OPPRESSION

All of the ideologies expressed within WLM provide the same definition of the problem facing women. The problem is oppression. The term "oppression" will be used throughout the thesis as it is used in WLM, to mean exploitation of women.

WLM perceives women as exploited, rather than discriminated against, and this definition of the existing situation is one of the basic distinctions which WLM makes between itself and such organizations as N.O.W. (National Organization of Women). WLM defines N.O.W. as reformist in intent, since its members desire to be allowed to participate in the present system on a basis of equality. N.O.W. perceives discrimination within the system; but since it accepts the values and institutions of that system as legitimate — and implicit in that is a belief in the ability and good intentions of that system to institute meaningful change — it also perceives that discrimination can be eliminated by using the tools of the system, e.g. legal reforms.

WLM consciously rejects the established system as legitimate. Its members perceive that it cannot, or more importantly, will not, admit women to a position of equality within its structure. Relying on a perception of power as the basis of relationships of inequality, exploitation of the subordinate actor occurs as the necessary means by which the dominant actor achieves and retains his position. Exploitation, in terms of using the subordinate actor to obtain benefits, both material and psychological, is essential to the maintenance of a dominant position. A system based on dominance/subordination cannot grant equality to the subordinate actor, since it will of necessity involve the loss of privilege and power by which the dominant actor defines and maintains himself. Also





basic to this analysis is the perception that no dominant group will willingly renounce its privileges, and that it will use every means available to it to preserve its position. Therefore, meaningful change in women's role cannot be brought about by appealing to the existing channels of change in this society. Since the changes they desire will not, in their estimation, be brought about by the existing tools of the system, they question the legitimacy of that system, and reject it.

Several factors exert an influence on such perceptions on the part of WLM members. One of the most important is the political experience of the women. They have adopted a world view of this society which is basically sociological or political rather than psychological or individual. Power is seen to inhere in political institutions, the instruments of social policy and change are political, human behavior and motivations at a group level are explained politically. They perceive that solutions to societal problems may be most effectively imposed through the use of political means.

In the recent past, they have seen and participated in the attempts of other subordinate groups, blacks and the poor, to bring about change in the system through reformist tactics — through acceptance of the legitimacy of the system and its institutions, and asking for change within the framework of that system. In other words, these groups have "played by the rules of the system". There is increasingly widespread feeling within these groups that such tactics accomplished nothing, and that "playing by the rules" only rendered their efforts useless, since "the rules" are made and perpetuated for the advantage and continued privilege of the dominant group. These women have witnessed a subsequent shift to the use of radical tactics by other subordinate groups, in the belief that such tactics might be more effective means of attaining their goal.





Many of the members of WLM were familiar with the demonstrated nonresponsiveness of the system to the attempts of other subordinate groups to achieve equality within that system. They had been involved in political organizations which had initially employed legitimate and non-violent tactics, then rejected them in favor of a more militant strategy when the first tactics proved ineffective means to attaining their desired goal. The ideological model of organizations demanding revolutionary change was available to them, and they perceived it as embodying the only effective alternatives available to them to bring about change.

In the case of women, as in the case of other subordinate groups, the members of WLM tended to perceive that women have always existed outside of the legitimate political power structure of society. Such power is monopolized by men.<sup>3</sup> Since they are outside the power structure, and they believe that it is impossible to break into that structure to effect change from within, there are therefore few constraints to "play by the rules". They believe that the example of the Suffrage movement has been instructive in that respect. The Feminist movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries is seen largely as a failure in its attempt to secure equality for women within the system. Although it gave women the vote, women were unable to capitalize on this potential source of power because they remained most fundamentally oppressed by the institutions of marriage and the family. Since they were closely constrained by these institutions, they were unable to use their vote effectively in order to gain a position of equality within the power structure.<sup>4</sup>

Further, the total problem of women's oppression is seen to encompass the life span of women, and to affect every facet of their lives — economically, psychologically, and sexually. However, the system is



perceived as capable of granting only piecemeal changes, which will have little effect on the totality of women's oppression. For example, the system may grant abortion, but will do so only if it is profitable, or if it continues to be controlled by the legislative and medical establishments rather than by women.

Another factor, broadly influencing the shift in direction to militant tactics when moderate tactics fail to bring quick response, is the age and class of the women themselves. Contradictions or inconsistencies in role demands will result in a rejection of the legitimacy of the system when members of the subordinate group perceive themselves as relatively deprived. Those women most likely to suffer from a perception of relative deprivation are middle class, rather than lower class women, because they have more opportunity to observe the discrepancies between their potential and actual positions. They are more likely to be exposed to contradictory expectations; for example, through education, employment, sexual behavior.

Change, although it may in fact be occurring, is doing so at a rate which is perceived as too slow to be meaningful in terms of changing the lives of a large number of women within the immediate future. These women are from a generation where rapid change is commonplace in areas where the system chooses to endorse change. The changes they demand are not coming fast enough, or are perceived as not coming at all, due to the inherent nature of the system. The women want change now. They look at the example of the earlier Feminist movement, which spanned 90 years of effort, and respond, "There has been too much sacrifice on the part of women for the sake of future generations. We want change now! We are struggling for ourselves, not our granddaughters." They firmly reject the value of the traditional feminine role which insists that women must





always defer their own needs to the needs of others more important — men and children.

A perception of exploitation, then, implies that the system cannot be changed by appealing to the existing institutions and values, since they are the tools of the oppressor. Change must come from outside the system. It must be revolutionary change, resulting in the self determination of the exploited subordinate group. The goal of self determination, in the case of women, means to be freed of the constraints of the ascribed female role, and to be free to choose from among role alternatives.

This definition is basically the common starting point of all WLM analyses. The implications drawn from it by the various factions begin with differing perceptions of the sources of women's oppression, and continue in controversy over the form which the revolution should take, and over the tactics which would most effectively bring about the desired goal.

The concern displayed among the factions over the "correct" analysis reflects the efforts of a budding movement to develop an ideology by which theoretical analyses may be satisfactorily integrated with behavior which will bring about implementation of the goal of self determination. All these efforts, in some form or another, attempt to synthesize other existing theoretical perspectives, notably that of the New Left, with the specific perspectives of the female experience. The process of ideology formation is still occurring in WLM, but the directions in which the differing perspectives are moving are becoming increasingly rigid.

## II. THE SOURCES OF OPPRESSION

WLM identifies two sources of oppression: 1) capitalism 2) men. YS and the Socialist Women's Caucus perceive capitalism as the source of





women's oppression. Although the Rap Group contains some socialist women, the leaders A and B, and the majority of the other women, tend to perceive men, individually and collectively, as the source. Most of the Silent Majority regulars were socialist, but some were not, and many of the peripheral members of the Parent Group were not, especially the "outsiders" or new women who attended one or two meetings. However, the ideology of Silent Majority women, socialists included, differed basically from that of either YS or the SWC.

The socialist women agree in their perception of capitalism as the source of women's oppression. Capitalism and capitalists exploit women in order to maintain themselves in a position of power. In their vocabulary, "The System" refers to "The Capitalist System". The values and institutions of the system are tools by which capitalism maintains itself.

If men appear to be oppressors, it is because they too are tools of capitalism. As capitalism creates racial divisions, in order to prevent whites and blacks from banding together to combat their common oppression, so it also creates sexual divisions, in order to prevent men and women from working together to overcome their common oppressor. Men (like whites and middle class people) are granted the petty rewards of the system. They are encouraged to perceive themselves as "better than" women (blacks, and working class people), because such false consciousness prevents them from understanding their true position of commonality as the exploited victims of capitalism. Men are socialized by "the system" into acting in oppressive roles. Men can be re-educated to an awareness of their real position, and of the common interest which they have with women in overthrowing the capitalist system. Some socialist women state that men and women are equally oppressed by capitalism. Others state that women are relatively more oppressed, but that the benefits



which men derive from the system are to a large extent spurious; that they are only mechanisms by which capitalism keeps men and women from recognizing their commonality of interests.

The non-socialist segment of the Rap Group, which will be termed feminist, reverses this position. Man is the oppressor, in a system centrally characterized by male supremacy. Men are perceived as consciously and deliberately oppressing women, in order to gain specific economic, sexual, and psychological benefits. The values and institutions of the social system exist as tools of men to preserve the system of male domination. All males are oppressors. They are, of necessity, because they can only maintain their position of privilege through oppression. In the same way that some blacks perceive all whites as racist, these women perceive all men as sexist. There is some debate over the question of whether all men are equally oppressive or not. Some women feel that some men are more oppressive than others, depending upon their individual power or psychological characteristics. Other women feel that all men are the same; some merely are better at disguising their essential sexism.

D. I think one thing we've tended to do here is to always talk about men as bastards, and not consider that there are some good ones, or even the reasons that make them bastardly.

B. I think they're all bastards. The smart ones are just more subtle. Eventually though, after pretending to be equalitarian, they'll get tired of the game and start demanding what they consider their rights.

F. Men can be very nice, but they are the central actors. They will do the things to be done, and take you along if you want to go — but strictly in a subsidiary, supporting role. They can take good care of you; so that, if you're not careful, you can fall asleep.

Interaction with men which may appear on the surface to be non-exploitive may be disguised, and therefore should always be questioned as suspect.





Sexism. The term "male chauvinism" or "sexism", has several connotations. It is generally taken to refer to individual instances of behavior which oppresses women. Some socialist women maintain that women can act in a sexist manner, as well as men. When used by socialists, the term also means an "institution" which is a tool of capitalism. When used by feminists, the term instead refers to the entire social system which is male dominated; i.e. compare the use of the term "the capitalist system" with the term "the sexist system".

The differing definitions of male chauvinism reflect the differing perceptions of the phenomenon. To the socialists, sexism is a necessary adjunct to capitalism, and can be effectively combatted and destroyed only with a socialist revolution.<sup>5</sup> To the feminists, sexism is itself a system of domination that antedated capitalism, and has postdated it in all socialist countries.

Using the preceding discussion of oppression, and the two differing perceptions of its source, the researcher will proceed to discuss each of the four factions or types of WLM in the city, with regard to their ideologies.

### III. THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS/LEAGUE FOR SOCIALIST ACTION

The Young Socialists/League for Socialist Action is a political organization, which accepts as its ideology Trotsky's analysis of international revolutionary socialism. The Young Socialists' organization was formed in 1967. It has both men and women in its membership.

#### Stated Goal

The goal of the Young Socialists' organization is to bring about a socialist revolution in this society. Following Trotsky's analysis, it





perceives itself as a "vanguard" organization; a small, tightly organized and disciplined elite corps which will provide the leadership for the proletariat in the revolution to come. The revolution itself will arise out of a mass movement of the working class, which the Young Socialists define in strict Marxist terms as those who do not own property nor control the means of production, but have only their labour to exchange for the products owned by the capitalists.

They are involved in those organizations which appear to be the most likely constituencies for growth of a "mass movement". They are involved in the trade unions. "Socialism will come to Canada when the workers learn through mass struggles that a better society is both necessary and possible."<sup>6</sup> They are involved in the student movement, through participation in the anti-war movement (SUPA and the Vietnam Mobilization Committee), and in high school and university student organizing.

"...we're going to help build a dynamic student movement in this country which, allying itself with the workers, can help make the revolution."<sup>7</sup> They are directly involved in the New Democratic Party. "...we know that the N.D.P.'s present image-conscious leadership and its program of reforming capitalism will never bring socialism to Canada. That's why the Young Socialists support those forces in the N.D.P. fighting for a socialist program."<sup>8</sup> The Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes supports the goal of self determination for Quebec. Female members of the Young Socialists are involved in WLM organizations across Canada.

#### Proposed Strategy for Women's Liberation

The stated goal for YS in WLM is to bring about a socialist revolution. Their proposed strategy for WLM is to organize women into a mass movement.



...our task as revolutionaries must be to organize women, to raise their understanding of exactly what their role in society is, bring to light all the facets of the extremely important role women have played in the development of civilization and begin to develop the pride we all deserve to have in our sex, and foremost to take on and defeat all those forces which are fighting so strongly against the liberation of women.<sup>9</sup>

All women are seen as potential members of WLM, or at least supporters of WLM as a revolutionary movement.

The women's liberation movement has the potential to reach out to all women, and to draw them into an anti-capitalist struggle and towards the socialist solution. The movement can reach far beyond its present boundaries to the working class women who are by far the most oppressed in our society.<sup>10</sup>

YS has stated an explicit program of issues around which women could be organized. This program was presented in a brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. The main points of the program are as follows:

1. Women must have complete control of their bodies. Freely available birth control information and devices. Government research to provide safe contraceptives. The removal of all restrictions on abortion — free abortion on demand.
2. Special measures to ensure that women have complete access to educational facilities. Abolition of fees, and an income for students. Universal coeducation. Special encouragement in analytical fields. Write women back into history — tell the truth about women. Abolition of all forms of sex discrimination in the schools.
3. Women must be freed from their traditional responsibility for the child. The government should provide free 24 hour child care centres which would permit women to seek employment outside the home. A state wage for those who choose to be homemakers.
4. Complete equality for women at work. Equal pay for equal work. Paid maternity leave. Preferential hiring and admission to certain types of educational programs to compensate for women's secondary status and psychological conditioning.<sup>11</sup>



## Membership Base for Women's Liberation

All of these issues are perceived by YS as capable of uniting the largest number of women, since they "speak to the real needs of women." Rather than attempting to categorize women into constituencies (e.g. housewives, working women, etc.), YS prefers to work on issues which will appeal to as many women as possible on a common denominator, cross-cutting the differences that may exist between sub-groups of women.

Because of the desire to build a mass movement, WLM should be non-exclusionary in its membership.

We must seek to bring all women, regardless of their political ideas, into the struggle around the demands of the women's liberation movement. We have to have confidence in women, in their ability to draw the necessary conclusions, on the basis of their experience in the movement, about the nature of their oppression and the society which is responsible for it.<sup>12</sup>

...since all women are oppressed, the only way in which our liberation can be achieved is through a movement which involves all women. The Alliance works towards the development of a democratically organized, broadly based and diverse movement, including women of all backgrounds, classes, political views, ages and occupations who unite in mass actions on core demands of women's liberation.<sup>13</sup>

In such a movement, women might even take part who are not socialist.

The Young Socialists and the League for Socialist Action agree that an analysis of women's position in society is very important (sic) we do not feel that agreement on analysis can be the basis of the group. There are and will continue to be in the future many women who, although they can see nothing fundamentally wrong with the system as a whole, feel there is something fundamentally wrong with women's position in society.

Are we in the group who profess to be Marxist, to exclude these women because their analysis is not "pure" and thus lose the opportunity through discussion and analysis around the activities of the group to convince these women of our analysis?<sup>14</sup>

Thus, women who enter the movement because of interest in one issue in WLM's programme, might be "politicized" through their participation in group activities and discussion with socialist women. By these means, women can be made to understand the real sources of their oppression, and







the correct solution to their problem situation.

### Tactics for Women's Liberation: The Mass Action

The basic organizational tactic advocated by YS is the use of mass actions.

...our strategy must embody the concept of a mass, action-oriented movement. This is the concept of getting people into action — not talking down to them, but organizing actions which are able to give expression to the mass opposition to the policies of the ruling class. Through their involvement in action, women can deepen their understanding of those issues. If there's one thing the ruling class in this country understands it's thousands upon thousands of people organized and in motion, demonstrating in the streets, demanding change. This challenge to the legitimacy of their power is in fact the only logic that they do understand.<sup>15</sup>

These demonstrations and mass actions are the best way to express the power of the movement and are essential to bringing into the movement large numbers of new women who may be radicalizing over one or another of the women's liberation demands.<sup>16</sup>

Abortion. YS has chosen the issue of abortion as the organizing tool which will mobilize the most women. "The issue of abortion is one that affects almost every woman in this society regardless of class, occupation or age, and for that reason thousands of women can be involved in the fight for free abortion on demand."<sup>17</sup>

The issue of abortion will "politicize" or "radicalize" women for two reasons. First, if the issue is won, and abortion laws are repealed,

...victory in this struggle will help to undermine one of the chief rationalizations for the oppression of women — our vulnerability to unplanned pregnancy. It will help women realize how powerful they are when they unite in common action and provide an enormous impetus to the women's liberation struggle, encouraging women to continue to fight around other issues as well.<sup>18</sup>

Second, once women are "politicized" around this issue, they will be able to identify more clearly the sources of their oppression, and continue to organize and mobilize around other issues. The granting of abortion repeal



is not seen to be "reformist", since women will not be content to accept only that, and will begin to articulate other, more radical demands.

Certainly the capitalist system is capable of enforcing most of the demands we make through women's liberation. And here, let us remember that any action we take on, unrelated to other things we will be doing, will be reformist. What will be necessary is a program which is general enough to attract large numbers of women to its ranks either around one specific issue or the entire program and yet specific enough that it leads to further demands and further confrontations with the forces responsible for women's oppression.<sup>19</sup>

However, the main purpose of raising the issue of abortion is primarily to organize women into a mass movement, and not to achieve abortion reform. If the power structure refuses to carry out that reform, it will still serve the purpose of radicalizing women, and would actually serve the purpose more effectively, since the women would come to realize where the responsibility lay for their present position, and the futility of attempting to change the system from within. The primary purpose of mass actions around any issue is to radicalize women, and to enlarge the membership of the movement. "It seems clear that if we were to continue to make the issue of abortion a key focus of women's liberation activity in the coming year, important gains can be made for the movement."<sup>20</sup>

#### Definition of the Young Socialist Role

The YS define their own role thus:

Our task as revolutionaries then is to put forward demands which will mobilize these women and aim the struggle in a revolutionary direction; in short, to set women in motion against their enemy, the capitalist system. We must help to bring this movement to full consciousness of itself and its power, and lead it to victory.<sup>21</sup>

Although this statement was written ostensibly to refer to all the "radical" women of WLM, it also reflects the basic YS conception of their own role as a vanguard, directing and shaping a revolutionary movement. Conversely, YS seemed to perceive that the bulk of the membership would be





involved in the movement primarily through the means of participation in mass actions. As one YS woman put it: "Women are interested, but won't do anything unless it has some active appeal. This seems to be the case in political organizations too. That is why demonstrations are useful; they get people involved, even for a short time, when they wouldn't ordinarily be involved at all." Implied in this statement is the understanding that a movement would require organizational and analytic leadership from a source other than the grass-roots membership. It would require, in addition to the "bodies" participating in demonstrations, a vanguard which would provide leadership and make the decisions.

#### Preferred Structure for Women's Liberation

To facilitate a mass movement, the YS advocate a specific structure for WLM.

If the group decides to adopt a program and take on a series of dynamic activities to involve women in the community it becomes necessary for the organization to tighten up its methods of operation. There should be babysitting arrangements set up, regular mailings done, chairmen to keep some semblance of order in the meetings, agendas for discussion and a spokesman elected by the group.<sup>22</sup>

Externally, WLM should attempt to develop coalitions with other revolutionary organizations and movements. "In particular, our movement should appeal to the organized trade union movement and the New Democratic Party, while at the same time maintaining an independent mass movement character."<sup>23</sup> Also, "...the struggle for the expansion of freedom on any front and for any sector of the population cannot be separated from the anti-capitalist movement of the working class throughout the world."<sup>24</sup>

Internally, WLM should have the following organizational form:

"...it is first of all essential that a women's liberation group be internally democratic; the general membership must have control and the leadership must be responsible to that membership."<sup>25</sup>





Projects: the Abortion Campaign of February 1971

Nationally, the policy of YS was to push the issue of free abortion on demand as the priority for WLM. In Edmonton, YS women strongly supported this policy. In November 1970, YS initiated a Canada-wide abortion campaign, to which YS women in the city gave their endorsement. The YS faction took responsibility during the period of the study for the organization of a local campaign which culminated in two demonstrations; one at city hall on February 8, 1971, and a march and rally in the business district on February 13 to coincide with a demonstration on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on the same day, which was attended by representatives from many WLM groups across the country.

The YS women proposed to the local Parent Group,

...that because one of the most important questions facing the movement today is whether or not we will take advantage of the momentum that has been built up around the call for free abortion on demand, using it to escalate the struggle and to draw in new layers of women, that we take up the call from the abortion workshop of the Saskatoon women's liberation conference for cross country abortion protests on February 14.<sup>26</sup>

The Parent Group made neither a formal acceptance nor rejection of the proposal, leaving the YS women to organize the campaign on their own initiative. Only one Silent Majority woman took any part in the two months of work on the campaign; the bulk of the responsibility was taken by the YS faction, who did excellent co-operative work among themselves, but failed to draw in the rest of the group during the entire campaign.

However, approximately 60 women turned out in support of both demonstrations at the height of the campaign, including many members of the Silent Majority and the Rap Group; although none of the Socialist Caucus women, nor the more influential members of the Silent Majority took any part in either the campaign or the demonstrations.



The participation of these women should not be judged as a gesture of support of YS and their policy; indeed, many of the women had indicated that they did not wish to be connected in any way to the campaign, and did not endorse it. Their participation resulted from events which took place during the campaign, which they perceived as a direct insult to WLM as a body.

The YS women, as part of the publicity for the campaign, attempted to present a brief to the city council, asking it to publicly endorse the principle of free abortion on demand. Although they had obtained permission before the council meeting for the presentation of their brief, when their representative appeared at the meeting to read it, she was refused permission to speak, and was literally laughed out of the chamber by the council members. The mayor remarked, amid laughter from the aldermen, that perhaps they should refer the women to the finance committee, since abortions appeared to be rather expensive in the city.

Within three hours, all of the members of WLM in the city had been notified of this incident. When the representative from the campaign returned to council chambers that evening for a second attempt to present her brief, she was accompanied by approximately 50 women who conducted a demonstration on the steps of city hall, then carried the demonstration to council chambers. When they were ejected from the chambers, they held a sit-in in the hall. That demonstration should be understood as a response to the hostility of the city council, and as a gesture of solidarity in the face of this external threat, rather than as an endorsement of YS. Many of the women who took part in that demonstration on the 8th of February, also turned out to participate in the march and rally on the 13th, as a continued expression of that solidarity.



Relationship between Young Socialists and Edmonton Women's Liberation

The refusal of the rest of the WLM members to participate in the campaign until threatened from outside the organization, was a reflection of their general relationship with YS. They distrusted YS, and that distrust stemmed from two factors.

First, most of the women disagreed with the strategy which YS proposed for WLM. One point of disagreement lay in the relative utility of mass actions and demonstrations as organizing tools to draw other women into the movement, or as tactics which would bring about the repeal of abortion laws. As G put it, "Demonstrations are like putting all your eggs in one basket, and the basket gets dropped at the end of the demonstration." By this, she meant that demonstrations tend to be isolated gestures, without any effective results. Those women who worked in the abortion referral service felt that the laws themselves were not the major block to free abortion on demand: rather, the total inadequacy of facilities existing to serve women wanting abortions was the major problem, calling for a different approach from WLM.<sup>27</sup> Some women questioned the assumption that abortion was a radicalizing issue, feeling that it was only a minor reform which would not lead women to further political activity. They noted that, although many women had become "mobilized" around the issue, the female population was fairly evenly split between support of the demand for abortion repeal, and total rejection of the idea. Some felt that WLM had already performed its function, by making abortion a public issue, which could now be better implemented by other, less radical, pressure groups from within the structure. These women felt that the issue of abortion had already been won, and that it was "just a matter of time" before it became reality. They did not wish to participate in an issue which they thought was now only one of reform. Another area of







disagreement was over using abortion as a priority issue. A multiple issue approach was preferred by some to a single issue approach. Women's oppression, it was said, is too complex to expend all of WLM's resources on an aspect of it.

All of these counter arguments had been presented either publicly, within meetings, or privately, to the researcher, by members of WLM in the city. They had also been presented at a national conference of WLM held in Saskatoon on November 20-22, 1970.<sup>28</sup> At this conference, taking in members of WLM organizations from Vancouver to Toronto, YS women had proposed a second abortion campaign as a follow-up to that of the previous spring. When put to a vote, their proposal was defeated. They then instigated a workshop on abortion, and emerged from it with another proposal for a second campaign, to culminate on February 14, 1971. This was taken by the other women at the conference as evidence that YS did not apply "internal democracy" in its own relationship with the rest of WLM. YS countered that the other women were not elected delegates, sent by their respective groups as representatives to the conference, so had no right to vote down a proposal. YS women then took their proposal to their local WLM organizations, and presented it there. In the city, as mentioned before, the members of WLM neither accepted nor rejected the proposal outright, leaving the YS women to do with it as they pleased.

The above incident illustrates very well the type of relationship that existed between YS and the remainder of WLM. Both at the Saskatoon conference, and in Edmonton, YS position papers accused WLM of practicing "exclusionist" policies, of being non-democratic or "elitist" in its own internal organization, and of leadership manipulation of the general membership. These accusations became particularly strong when YS was expelled from Vancouver Women's Caucus; an expulsion which YS women in Edmonton



had proposed, unsuccessfully, that the local Parent Group publicly condemn in a letter to the Vancouver Women's Caucus. In a position paper to WLM in Edmonton, YS noted:

Whenever there are clique leaderships or inner circles of decision makers, new women will never become integrated into the group or into the movement. The problem of new women coming to one or two meetings never to be seen again, has been a perennial occurrence in Edmonton women's liberation group and other groups for this very reason.<sup>29</sup>

The second major reason for the distrust which the rest of the WLM members felt towards YS stemmed from incidents such as the abortion campaign. They perceived that there was a discrepancy between the call by YS for internal democracy and a non-exclusionary policy within WLM, and the actual behavior of YS towards them. The continual insistence of YS women on pursuing their own strategy in the face of disagreement and lack of support from the other women in WLM was perceived by the latter as evidence that YS itself practiced elitist and non-democratic tactics with the rest of WLM. The women also perceived that such non-democratic tactics stemmed from the primary commitment of YS women to the Young Socialist organization, rather than to WLM. They felt that YS women formed their policy for WLM in accordance with the overall revolutionary strategy which YS/LSA had in mind for the whole society. Rather than being primarily concerned with the goals of women and women's liberation, they perceived that YS women were primarily concerned with the goals of their own organization.

YS women were perceived as elitist because they followed their own strategy and acted within WLM in the capacity of a power bloc; they were perceived as non-democratic because they pursued that strategy in the face of opposition from the majority in WLM; and they were perceived as exclusionary, because they belonged to an organization which was itself



exclusionary, because WLM had no voice in the policy decisions made in YS meetings concerning WLM.

Several examples might be presented, to give a more concrete picture of the kind of discrepancies which the members of WLM observed between the statements on theory and actual behavior of YS.

First, during the series of educationals which WLM held on campus, several incidents occurred. On three occasions, both male and female members of YS sold, and passed out free, YS literature outside the doors where the educationals were being held. This was done on all three occasions without previously asking permission of WLM, and it conveyed the impression to those unaware of the real situation that WLM and YS were either in coalition, or were one and the same.

Although within WLM, YS consistently opposed the desire of some women to declare WLM a revolutionary socialist group, at public meetings they often used the occasion to attempt to force other WLM speakers into a position where they would have to acknowledge capitalism as the source of women's oppression. These tactics were used in situations, such as the campus educationals, where they themselves could not be identified by outsiders as members of WLM, but merely as questioners from the audience. For example, one of the educationals was presented on the topic of male chauvinism, by two women, H and K, who were later to set up the Socialist Women's Caucus. Two YS women, L and M, questioned them from the audience:

M. Has male chauvinism existed in all societies? When and how did it begin?

L. What do you see as the real cause of the oppression you're talking about? Who are the 'they' you have been referring to as subordinating women, and where do 'they' get their power?

K. I don't need to tell you that, L.

H. 'They' are anyone who wants to keep women subservient.







M. Let's be more specific about who 'they' are. 'They' are the people who run our society, who don't want women in their labour market, who want to maintain the status quo.

In another instance, YS held a public meeting on campus to discuss "Women's Liberation: Its Potential as a Revolutionary Movement". That it was sponsored by YS was indicated on the advertising posters in small letters on the bottom, conveying the impression to those who did not read the small print that it was, instead, sponsored by WLM itself. Although some of the other women discussed the idea of publicly dissociating themselves from the presentation, nothing was done, because they didn't want people outside the movement to become aware of dissention within. The issue was debated in a WLM meeting, without influencing YS, however.

K. Women's liberation is considered by the public to be a concrete organization, not merely a concept. When you speak about it, it is assumed that you are speaking on behalf of that organization and presenting its views. So, you need the consent of that organization before doing something like this.

H. A presentation like yours gives the YS perspective of women's liberation under the guise of being the total perspective of women's liberation. No-one from women's liberation except YS had been asked to speak. We hadn't even been notified about the meeting.

L. If people misinterpret the posters, it was a misunderstanding and not the fault of YS.

G. If we were a group like the Panthers, you wouldn't be calling a meeting on us without our permission.

Within meetings, YS women also tended to present themselves in ways which were interpreted by the other women as interference with the wishes of the majority. YS women tended to support each other in debate with the rest of the group, giving the impression that they were "ganging up" or acting according to plan. They often used the mechanism of the "misunderstanding", or of "misinterpreting" the statements of other women, and calling for elaborate clarifications of the others' positions. The rest of the members saw this behavior as deliberate attempts to hinder



and retard the decision-making processes in the group. They were angered by it, but could not accuse the YS women of using such tactics, since the reply invariably was, "But I misunderstood! It was all a misunderstanding!"

Over the period of the study, the other regular members in the Parent Group grew increasingly more distrustful and hostile towards the YS women, as they perceived this type of interference more and more acutely. This was especially true of the women who formed the Socialist Women's Caucus, making it an explicit policy to bar all YS women from joining their Caucus.

The advocacy by YS that the Parent Group should be reorganized into a different structure, with votes on issues, elected officers and spokeswoman, was perceived not as a means of implementing a more democratic internal structure, but as a means by which YS might more easily control meetings (e.g. by packing a meeting with YS women when an issue came to a vote). Over time, all statements made by YS women came to be discredited, blocked, or ignored by the rest of the regulars, because the latter tended to perceive and interpret these statements merely as another manoeuvre or "trick" to manipulate them into adopting YS policy.

As noted earlier, YS were expelled from Vancouver Women's Caucus. Several position papers were written by both factions, and circulated widely throughout the movement in Canada. The YS women charged the VWC with "exclusionism, sectarianism, and elitism", stating that VWC discouraged women who were not radical socialists from joining VWC because their political analysis was not "pure", and that a clique leadership controlled VWC. They subsequently set up another women's liberation organization, titled the Vancouver Women's Alliance, which also drew in non-YS women.



A paper written by members of the VWC responded to their charges.

"We and, most importantly, new women have always been excluded from the YS/LSA decision-making."<sup>30</sup> "...our motion is an attempt to exclude a group whose structure is centralized and authoritarian, and whose members are not allowed to disagreed(sic) publicly...with YS/LSA positions, whose membership and decision-making meetings are closed and whose allegiance is apparently to the YS/LSA."<sup>31</sup>

The paper went on to define YS/LSA as a national organization which was "democratic centralist", meaning that all policy was debated democratically within the organization, but that when strategy was decided at national conventions through delegates, all members abided by that decision. The membership was under discipline not to reveal overall strategy or internal disagreements to outsiders. YS/LSA made a practice of joining other groups with revolutionary potential, and attempting to implement its own strategy in those groups. In the case of WLM, such a strategy had been decided by all members of YS/LSA.

They then come to Women's Caucus to present their position. Within Women's Caucus, they do not share with other women the process by which they reached their position. Although their position on women's liberation flows from the LSA's overall strategy, this strategy has never been discussed in Women's Caucus.<sup>32</sup>

The YS/LSA strategy is based on the belief that the struggle for socialism must take place first within the existing structures of the trade union movement and the NDP. They believe that the role of every other movement is to act as a pressure group on the NDP and trade unions, and ultimately to participate in the struggle within those organizations. This means that wherever they are (be it the anti-war movement or Women's Caucus) they impose limits on those movements so that they will not cut across the YS/LSA's approach to the NDP and the trade union leadership.<sup>33</sup>

The YS/LSA's position cuts across building a strong, autonomous women's movement. First, it attempts to subordinate that movement to the interests of the NDP and trade union leaderships. Second, their theory that the YS/LSA is the vanguard and must give revolutionary leadership to all movements means that their







policy in VWC flows from a pre-determined strategy and not from the experience of the women's movement itself.<sup>34</sup>

Their claim to be defenders of democracy in Women's Caucus is hypocritical. They do not in fact respect majority decisions in their work in other organizations....When they are defeated, if they control the organizational apparatus, they ignore the vote / if they don't, they continually re-argue the position.<sup>35</sup>

Although these statements came from Vancouver Women's Caucus rather than WLM in Edmonton, the researcher feels that they represent fairly accurately the perception held of YS by most of the members in Edmonton. As well, they offer some additional information on the internal structure of YS. This information is quite scarce, and its scarcity lends some credibility to the charge that YS is an organization such as is described in the preceding quotes. The information in this particular paper came from a member of VWC who was also a former member of YS. Although she presented this information as a critique of YS, she did at least have access to it as an "insider", and did not base her statements on mere speculation. The statements also tie in with previous quotes from YS position papers, and with the behavioral indicators presented by YS in the city during the period of observation.

Another example of contradictory statements from YS could be used as evidence of their tactics. At times, they stated that diversity in strategy was good for WLM, "All women should be able to participate, even if they don't agree on the final goal." That is, women who do not agree on the final goal may still use the same tactics. However, N, one of the most influential YS women, once remarked at a strategy debate, "There are some tactics that are wrong for women's liberation. All strategies are not equally valid. Some might be damaging to the movement as a whole; they are incorrect, and must be eliminated."



### Concluding Statement

The YS bloc or faction in WLM appeared not to refer to WLM for its ideology, but to the Young Socialist organization. This organization seemed to provide them with a strong reference group, by which they justified their actions. They seemed to perceive themselves as honestly trying to implement and further an ideology in which they sincerely believed. They formed a faction whose ideology was well developed and integrated, and which they used consistently in order to guide their behavior in WLM. This coherent integration of ideology and behavior made it possible for them to act as a power bloc, and to exert a very strong influence on WLM throughout the year, albeit a negative influence, since they were opposed and discredited by almost all the other women in the Parent Group. Conflict between YS and the rest of the Parent Group was one of the major preoccupations of the Parent Group, and resulted in exhausting a large portion of the group's resources of time and energy. It was a major contributing factor in the further splitting of the Parent Group by formation of the Socialist Women's Caucus, and of the decision by the Caucus to separate from the Parent Group, an occurrence which sparked further upheavals within that group, and finally led to its virtual disintegration.

During the summer months of 1971, the researcher had an opportunity to speak with N again. She said at that time that there had been some changes in thinking among the YS women since the break-up of the Parent Group in April. She said that she had been influenced by the Rap Group leaders to reconsider her position on YS, and that some other YS women had followed her lead. She also stated that there might have been some truth in the allegations that YS had been obstructionist in the past year, and added, "I hated going to women's liberation. I only went because I



considered it was my revolutionary duty."

She and two other YS women were planning at the time to start living together communally, and to make their home a "Women's House", similar to that of A and B. They were also planning on doing some rapping. She said, "We are just beginning to do some real rapping. I had always been afraid of rapping before." These statements indicated an abrupt change from the YS attitude towards the Rap Group that had been expressed throughout the year. YS had previously labelled rap sessions as "bitch sessions" and "group therapy", and had appeared to disapprove of rap sessions quite thoroughly. At this time, however, N expressed admiration for A and B and their approach to WLM.

A conversation with one of the rap leaders corroborated her story, although the former added that, "Our political positions are still fundamentally different — L still very much believes in socialism as the answer."

It would appear then, that despite some "rethinking", the position of the YS women is still basically revolutionary socialist. Judging from the past relationship of antagonism between YS and the Socialist Women's Caucus and Silent Majority women, it is also doubtful that the Caucus and the remaining members of the Parent Group will perceive these new manifestations from YS women as anything other than a further attempt to manipulate them and "infiltrate" them under the guise of having changed their position. Another interpretation could be given to their ostensible shift in thinking. The Parent Group has dissolved, and the Socialist Women's Caucus has barred YS from joining its ranks. The only remaining WLM representative in the city is the Rap Group, which may merely become the new target for "infiltration".





#### IV. THE SOCIALIST WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The Socialist Women's Caucus took form during November and December of 1970, as a splinter group which separated from the remainder of the Parent Group on the basis of an ideological difference. In November, they advocated that WLM openly acknowledge itself as an organization whose goal was a socialist society, and whose strategy was therefore formulated in terms of a socialist ideology. When the majority of the Parent Group rejected this proposal, they separated from it to form their own Caucus. Although at first they maintained some linkages of communication with the Parent Group, by December the Caucus had assumed the form of a completely autonomous, and isolated organization.

Unlike the YS faction, the major characteristic of the SWC appeared to be inconsistency, both in terms of the elements of their ideology, and in terms of the integration of their ideology with their behavior. YS had a clearly defined ideology which facilitated solidarity within the group, and which served to guide their behavior effectively in terms of the use of specific tactics, which, according to their overall strategy, were those alternatives which would best serve in obtaining their goal.

SWC, by contrast, was characterized by rapid fluctuations and shifts in ideological emphasis, and a concomitant lack of integration with behavior of the women involved, in application of that ideology to specific tactics. Their ideology was still in the formative stages, and they were still borrowing heavily from the ideology of the New Left. Direct application of New Left principles to the situation of women appeared to be fairly common, not only for the socialist women in the city, but throughout the movement.<sup>36</sup>



### Stated Goal

SWC women define the capitalist system as the primary source of women's oppression. Their stated goal is the overthrow of capitalism through a revolution, and its replacement with a socialist alternative. In this, they concur with YS.

Unlike YS, they do not believe that women's liberation will come with the revolution. Instead, they believe that women's liberation will be attained after the revolution. This is because of the explicit linkage which they make between capitalism and male chauvinism. Males are socialized to behave in a chauvinist or sexist manner in the capitalist system, specifically for the benefit of that system.<sup>37</sup> Like racism, sexism is one of the tactics which capitalism uses to "blur class lines" or prevent workers from identifying with their true class interests. Here the first inconsistency appears in the ideology of SWC, for it would seem that sexism, like racism, would have to be overcome before the working class could establish enough solidarity to carry out a revolution successfully.

However, the women of SWC maintain that, after the prerequisite of the socialist revolution, will come the women's revolution. As K stated, "The socialist position of women's liberation is that men are as much oppressed as women because they are unwittingly socialized into their roles. They must be re-educated, which is possible only under socialism. Women's liberation postdates the socialist revolution. Only after socialism will women be able to conduct their revolution, through personal influence on the men they know."

It is assumed that, since life styles would be collective, that this would facilitate the ability of women to "re-educate" men through group efforts. Living in a communal situation, women would be better able



to defend themselves than they are presently, by supporting each other against the demands and expectations of the men that they perform the "female role". Through "logical argument" they would also gain support from individual men who were impressed by logic. According to H, "The group will come to the support of the individual, if the individual's position is right for the group." It is assumed that what is right for women will naturally be perceived by all as right for the group. The techniques of collective "struggle, unity, struggle", will be applied to the problem of women's oppression, and so will be solved by that mechanism.

In the meantime, the members of SWC made statements to the effect that they "do not trust revolutionary men. They are all on ego trips and out after power." Yet, at other times, they advocated that men no longer be excluded from WLM, or at least not from SWC, since they themselves had "advanced beyond the need to remain separated from men", and expressed disapproval of the Rap Group for its negative stance on male participation in the movement.

There appeared to be a continuing inconsistency or contradiction in their ideology concerning the relative responsibility of sexism and capitalism as the primary source of female oppression. This contradiction they attempted to resolve by compartmentalizing the two variables, making socialism their first priority, and a struggle against sexism as a secondary issue. It would have been difficult for them to make any other response, since they exhibited a strong commitment to a Marxist explanation of society, and the goal of a socialist revolution would of necessity involve the co-operation of radical men and women, especially since the strongest impetus for revolutionary change has so far been found in male dominated organizations.





However, it might appear difficult to place the sole responsibility for sexism on the capitalist system, in the light of some contrary evidence. It would appear that women were oppressed in societies before the inception of capitalism, and that women have not gained the right to self determination under any of the existing socialist régimes. While their position has improved relative to that of pre-revolutionary conditions in their respective countries, they still do not have a position of equality with men.

In Russia, women are expected to work outside the home, but are also still expected to perform the household duties, since Soviet men have not renounced the benefit of leisure for themselves within the home at the expense of women. Proportionately, more men than women are employed in the more highly paid technical positions. Despite the claim that Soviet women have entered skilled occupations in higher proportions than have women in Western countries, it would appear that this phenomenon was occasioned because of a shortage of male labour through the losses of a revolution, two world wars, and sundry political purges, rather than by an abrupt change in male attitudes towards women. There also appear to be few women in positions of political power at a high level.

The Communist Party in China sought by deliberate policy to commit women to the revolution through promises to alleviate the suffering of the masses of Chinese women under the traditional patriarchal system.<sup>38</sup> Great gains have been made in terms of emancipating women from a subordinate position within the family, and apparently efforts are being made to socialize children in a more equalitarian fashion than in pre-revolutionary times.<sup>39</sup> However, women still appear to gain power within the political system by much the same means as they did in the traditional



system — through their position as the wives of powerful men, e.g. the wives of Mao, Lin Piao, and Chou En Lai.<sup>40</sup>

Although women were called upon to bear weapons in the Cuban revolution, the major mention which is made of them in Ché Guevara's manual of guerrilla warfare is his comment on their capacity to raise the morale of the men through acting as nurses and cooks.<sup>41</sup> After the revolution, Fidel asks the question, "If the women don't cook, clean and take care of the children, who will?" A beauty contest is reported in Granma, in which the winner is "a green eyed brunette".

Such evidence is explained by socialist women on the grounds that all revolutions up until this time have been "incomplete revolutions". The revolution of which they plan to be a part will, of course, be the "real" revolution. This element of their ideology is utopian, as are all revolutionary ideologies "before the fact", when their function is to act as blueprints for the solution of problem situations. If an ideology is to continue to be satisfactory as an explanation of events, it must supply plausible reasons for apparent failures or deviations in the past, and assurances that such a failure could not occur again. Only in this way can the allegiance of the believer be sustained.

The belief in "collective struggle" after the socialist revolution to bring about female liberation is also an attempt to apply socialist ideology to solve the problematic issue of male chauvinism. Sexism is an issue that these women perceive as real both inside and outside the radical Left. However, the women also perceive that they are unable to cope with the problem. This inability to cope, is attributed to the present social and economic structure. The social structure, in effect, might even be termed "the lesser enemy", for there is greater hope of defeating it in the foreseeable future, than there is of defeating sexism.



It would appear that the relative culpability of sexism and capitalism has yet to be resolved by the women in SWC. They maintain, on the one hand, that sexism is part of the capitalist conspiracy, that the two are related, with capitalism the causal agent for the occurrence of sexism. Yet they also maintain that sexism will exist after the socialist revolution, since the "women's revolution" will take the form of fighting sexism collectively. Thus they also grant sexism the quality of an independent variable, which is capable of existing without the causal agent of capitalism. Capitalism would then appear to be a support of sexism, but neither necessary nor sufficient for its maintenance. If it were, a "women's revolution" would be unnecessary. In addition, the SWC women did not attempt to explain the existence of sexism in pre-capitalist societies.

Finally, the prospect of attempting to combat sexism as a priority at the present time would tend to retard the development of a revolutionary socialist movement. The women state that, although sexism should be combatted in their private relationships, the emphasis should be placed on "re-educating" the men so that a satisfactory adjustment could be worked out between the two individuals, in order that they might better work for the revolution. An attempt to assign responsibility to individual men for their sexist behavior (rather than explaining it in terms of the inevitable and unconscious consequences of socialization) is labelled as giving "personal" rather than "political" explanations of phenomena. In accord with WLM and New Left belief, individual or psychological explanations are invalid; sociological or "political" explanations are valid. On the other hand, they accuse radical men of "ego tripping".







## Proposed Strategy for Women's Liberation

Socialist women have a specific task or role to perform in developing the conditions for the revolution. Their contribution to the revolution is the destruction of the nuclear family. The nuclear family is believed to be intimately linked with the capitalist system. Without it, capitalism would find it impossible to function, or at least, "the contradictions within the system would be sharpened" such that functioning would be difficult, thus hastening the other conditions which will inevitably bring about the revolution.

One of the basic contradictions of advanced capitalism is that which, at the same time, forces women to remain in the home, and forces them out of the home to work at paid labour. As women come to feel the strain of this contradiction, they will increasingly become conscious of their oppression.

In her "Discussion Paper — Towards a Strategy", a movement woman, Melody Killian, outlines what appear to be developing trends in female employment:

...a temporary opening of opportunities in the highly specialized and advanced skill (sic) technological fields because of a shortage of trained people; men taking over traditionally female-dominated semi-professional fields; greatly increased unemployment at the lowest and semi-skilled levels. These jobs are being claimed by men who have been forced into almost permanent unemployment. Women at these levels will be forced back into the home and on to the welfare rolls.<sup>42</sup>

A classic example of role inconsistency is the welfare mother. If she remains at home on welfare, she is a "parasite". If she goes out to work, she is "neglecting her children".<sup>43</sup>

Killian goes on to state: "One of the crucial problems of advanced capitalism, at this stage, is the absorption of surplus, including surplus manpower."<sup>44</sup> "The largest holding institution of surplus manpower is the



home. Most women...are a hidden part of the pool of unemployables."<sup>45</sup>

Another paper, a socialist "Reply" to a feminist position paper by Ellen Willis,<sup>46</sup> states:

Contemporary capitalist society cannot maintain a full employment economy. Women are socialized to believe that their primary job is in the home, because it is unlikely that there will be enough jobs for them outside the home....Also the level of living provided by the average male salary is barely sufficient for the average family. The woman in the home is important to support him and encourage him to continue in his alienating labour. Her unpaid domestic work is integral to maintaining the capitalist system.<sup>47</sup>

Women in the home "perform the consumer functions useful to the market and industrial economy"<sup>48</sup>, and act as socializing agents of the child; although "The expansion of the service sector to create jobs for unemployable men will increasingly undermine women's home labour, leaving her with essentially nothing to do."<sup>49</sup>

However, while the woman is encouraged to remain in the home — especially during periods of high unemployment so that she will not deepen the surplus manpower crisis any further, there are counterpressures forcing her out of the home — as evidenced by the increasing number of women in the labour force.

Besides the lack of meaningful employment within the home, at least three other factors contribute to the increased phenomenon of women working or attempting to find work.<sup>50</sup> First, many men are earning less than enough to support their families. Many are unemployed. The corporate elite is lengthening the period of schooling for young men into the mid and late twenties. The burden of financial support for these families falls on women. Second, there is an increased tax burden placed on the working class. "The corporate state is trying to make the workers bear the burden of paying for the increased social services and the wars that are necessary for the maintenance of the soical (sic) relations of



capitalism everywhere in the world."<sup>51</sup> The working class is also deeply in debt because of their participation in the consumer-oriented society. Third, the family in advanced capitalist society is pathological — rising rates for divorce and illegitimate births are indicators that more women are being thrown on their own resources rather than remaining economically dependent on men.

Unemployment and job instability are always greater problems for women than for men. As stated in the "Reply",

When there is a shortage of jobs for men, women are squeezed out of the labour force. Women are socialized to set their priorities on the home and family so they can work for it when needs be and they can return to it when the labour force no longer needs them. Thus they remain a low paid scab labour force, depressing wages and buttressing the capitalist system.<sup>52</sup>

If large enough numbers of women left the home in preference for paid labour, "It is just this defection from the home that could place crucial pressure on the manpower absorption and social control problems of the corporate state."<sup>53</sup> However,

The main stumbling block to the creation of massive demands for work is the ideology that children need women at home, and must be raised in nuclear homes by their biological mothers. It is this guilt (sic) and fear that has maintained the home this long. This ideology — the motherhood mystique — must be undermined. It is one of the most powerful of our culture.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the destruction of the monogamous nuclear family which keeps women subordinate to the needs and demands of husband and children, is a necessary prerequisite to the entrance of women into the labour force in massive numbers, which will in turn contribute to the deepening of contradictions within the capitalist system, posing problems which it cannot solve, and contributing to its destruction.

Following from this perception of women's position in relation to the family and the economy, the strategy proposed by socialist women is







"to attempt to move large numbers of women out of the home."<sup>55</sup>

Demands for educational equality, for birth control and abortion, for equality in wages and benefits and the demand to end sex-linked occupations should be seen as tactics to aid in enticing women out of the home, making work possible and more worthwhile to them.<sup>56</sup>

Also, demands for day care should be raised, since day care would help to weaken the value of women remaining at home to care for their children. Beyond this,

The day care demand holds within it the seeds of the new, extended relationships between people that will replace the conjugal, paternalistic family. New, extended communal forms of living and socializing children must be at the base of the new society if women are to be free.<sup>57</sup>

If women were made conscious of their oppression in the home, and hence motivated to leave it; and if they are made conscious of their oppression in the paid labour force, and hence motivated to demand equality with men, both the nuclear family and the economic system would be undermined, weakened, and eventually rendered inoperative. Once the family structure has been removed, the real poverty of all women would become evident.<sup>58</sup>

It is argued by socialist women that such a strategy is revolutionary rather than reformist, because it does not merely demand an equal right to be exploited under capitalism with men, but strikes at the very foundations of capitalism itself. A demand is reformist if it can be resolved within the system. "A revolutionary demand is one that cannot be met within the system." A demand concerning women in relation to the family and the economy is revolutionary,

...because...1) it speaks to a repressed possibility of the system and also accelerates trends already underway. 2) it threatens an already weakened point in the structure of advanced capitalism. 3) it cannot be granted by the capitalist class.<sup>59</sup>

The socialist women are also aware that any demand can be co-opted by the system, if it is presented in isolation from an overall strategy.



For example, the issue of day care could be solved within the capitalist system, and be extremely profitable to employers, if day care centers were implemented by corporate enterprise. Day care, under the control of business, works to the advantage of the capitalist, since he obtains a more efficient, reliable worker if the mother knows her children are being cared for; and it also serves the function of socializing young children into the expectations of them as workers of the future. Day care controlled by business is co-optation; it is the managerial solution for the contradictions between the needs of the family and the demands of the economy. It is a good investment.

An article entitled "The Politics of Day Care" points out these possibilities.

With day care, women can work.  
They can come to work on time.  
They can work more efficiently.  
They can be dependable.

Day care will transform more mothers  
Into more workers.<sup>60</sup>

They say women need day care to be good mothers.  
What they really mean is that mothers need day  
care to be good workers.

Because the mother's role is interfering with the  
work routine.

The same authorities who have stressed the maternal  
role now realize that devoted mothers have a high  
Labor turnover rate.  
That being there when the child needs you means  
Not being there when they need you.<sup>61</sup>

As the workday regulates the performance of workers  
so day care is meant to regulate the behavior of kids.  
Day care is the preparation and training for the  
workday. It's a head start.

.....

Day care is based on the factory system in order to  
make growing up predictable.<sup>62</sup>



The cost of disintegration (of the family) is very high.  
Children are seen as resources.  
To be invested in. To be developed.  
To increase production.  
To increase consumption.<sup>63</sup>

Day care will not free women from the slave labor they do at home. It will simply allow them to do wage labor outside. Day care makes both kinds of labor possible. The husband and the boss want their cake and eat it too.<sup>64</sup>

For these reasons, demands for day care must not permit the capitalist system to make day care profitable, by being presented in isolation from a socialist ideology. Demands for day care must specify that such care be communally controlled and organized by the parents of the children, and by other workers. If such centers are controlled communally by the workers, they will act as object lessons in collective living and decision making, which will help the workers to form socialist values and commitments, and will also function to socialize children into early acceptance of collective values, rather than preparing them for labour in the capitalist system.

SWC specifically rejected endorsement of any issues which they perceived as reformist. For this reason, socialist women have rejected abortion as an issue upon which WLM should concentrate its resources. Since "respectable" organizations have endorsed the position that abortion should be a private matter between a woman and her doctor,<sup>65</sup> they feel that the issue will be resolved within the existing structure. Only demands which cannot be met by the system will increase discontent and disillusionment to the point where the population, or relevant segments of it, will reject the legitimacy of the system and begin to use the tactics which will bring it down and replace it with one more responsive to their needs.





This rejection of reformism led to a different reaction than that of YS to the Royal Commission Report. YS had entered a brief to the Commission, and was willing to use its recommendations as valid evidence of the issues most women perceived as important, and therefore as organizing tools for women who would not accept WLM, but who would accept the evidence of a "respectable" document. SWC rejected the report on the grounds that it was reformist, that its recommendations would only perpetuate the capitalist system and the privileged position of middle class women.

#### Definition of the Role of Socialist Women's Caucus

Like YS, SWC women perceive their own role as one of organizing other women so that they may be directed towards a revolutionary consciousness and strategy. Unlike YS, they do not perceive this function in terms of drawing large numbers of women into WLM, where they may themselves form the vanguard leadership of a mass movement. Theoretically, at least, they have adopted the strategy of the New Left — to go out from WLM into the community and to organize women around issues which are of specific importance to specific groups of women. Once these women have been "politicized", i.e. made aware of the capitalist source of their oppression, the socialist solution, and the appropriate tactics to fight capitalism, the members of SWC can then phase themselves out of the situation, leaving the women in control.

#### The Issue of "Levels of Consciousness"

Like YS, the SWC women perceived themselves as a vanguard leadership, in possession of a special understanding which equipped them for the leadership of other women both inside and outside WLM. Such a self-perception led to a somewhat ambivalent orientation; on the one hand,



of a desire to go outside WLM to contact and support other women, and on the other hand, a strongly expressed desire for other women to come to them on their terms. On several different occasions, they voiced the wish that other women would "join" them. Since they were certain that they were in possession of the correct analysis, it was perceived as only natural that other women should wish to align themselves with them.

Because they saw themselves as uniquely capable of understanding the source of women's oppression, and the solution to the problem through a socialist strategy, they characterized their own group as "the only one where any thinking is going on", to use H's words. They termed this understanding as possessing a "high level of consciousness". This phrase was often used when referring to themselves in comparison with other women both inside and outside the movement. Other women, both in the Parent Group and the Rap Group, had a relatively "low level of consciousness", which was, presumably, higher at least than that of women outside the movement, since they were aware that women were oppressed, and women outside the movement often seemed not to be so aware. Of the Rap Group, K remarked, "The rap group is not on my level. I've advanced beyond it. It can't contribute anything to me, although I realize that it does help women who need support in their struggles with their personal relationships." The Rap Group was, in their opinion, geared to "personal" oppression, rather than being political in its analysis. Furthermore, SWC did not agree with the position of the Rap Group leaders that men were the source of women's oppression. They tended to perceive the Rap Group as on the periphery of WLM, contrary to the Rap Group, which perceived itself as the core of WLM.



## Classes and Constituencies

Once this had been selected as the appropriate role for socialist women, the next question became one of defining which groups or "constituencies" of women it would be most appropriate and profitable to attempt to organize. That is, which groups of women possessed the most revolutionary potential. Such a question involved a definition in terms of class, since socialist women perceive that women suffer from a dual oppression — as women, and as workers. One of the major debates within the movement concerns the question of whether or not women constitute a class.

It is sometimes argued within the movement, usually by feminists, that women do form a class, because of their sexual function. That is, that all women are in the same position vis-a-vis men. Also, when defined according to objective economic criteria, there is some statistical evidence to support the claim that women do not necessarily fall into the same class as their husbands. Working women earn substantially less, on the average, than do men.<sup>66</sup> In many families where the combined income of husband and wife provide a middle class income, the husband's earnings more than double those of his wife. Once the support of his income is removed, the woman's earnings are well below the poverty level.<sup>67</sup> A large proportion of those families on welfare have female family heads. Even in middle class homes where the wives do not work for pay, they are still exchanging their labour for the physical necessities of life. In this sense, they do not share the class of their husbands, since they do not themselves earn any income.

However, socialist women generally maintain that women, in fact, do not form a distinctive class. Women face dual oppression: as women, and as workers. "At the highest level of social and economic well-being,







the less intense the two oppressions. At the lowest scale, the stronger are both oppressions."<sup>68</sup> The oppression of women as women cuts across class lines. All women are oppressed sexually and psychologically. However,

Women at the highest level (defined as non-working middle class housewives)...are not economically exploited. In fact they are highly paid domestic workers because they live off the surplus earned by their husbands. In fact, they may be exploiting other women, especially domestic help. While these women may feel oppressed as women and desire abortion reform, day care centres, better contraceptive devices and more job opportunity, it is not necessarily in their self-interest to support the struggle against economic exploitation which the working class woman must undertake as PART of her struggle for liberation as a woman.<sup>69</sup>

Women, like men, are divided by class interests. Marlene Dixon discusses further the concept of class with regard to women:

The class interests of middle class women have...always been opposed to radical changes in the position of women, since attacks upon the economic exploitation of women and upon the institution of marriage have always threatened their comfort, security, and status.<sup>70</sup>

At the centre of the problem is the fact that middle class women are socially and economically dependent upon marriage TO MAINTAIN THEIR CLASS POSITION and indeed, their selfhood, for a woman not married to a man is forced into a marginal non-existence in this society (sic): woman is not complete a "real woman" unless she has her man. The greatest tragedy of the middle class woman's life is not to be married. The result is a propensity to moderate programs designed to permit middle class wives and mothers to live with greater ease and pleasure, to have more privileges (sic) than they now enjoy, and to have greater ease to pursue their dillitantism (sic) and outside social interests.<sup>71</sup>

Hence, revolutionary socialist women should concern themselves with organizing working women. Some socialist women express the hope that women can form "class alliances" around common issues in which women of all classes share a stake. They claim that demands affecting women's psychological and sexual oppression, "...demands which assert our humanity, our right to control our own lives, are not middle class but an essential part of the workingclass (sic) struggle — so long as they are posed collectively,



and not in terms of individual solutions."<sup>72</sup> Such demands to control one's own life are essential prerequisites to political action.

However, many socialist women consider middle class women to be unequivocally "part of the problem" rather than "part of the solution". They regard the middle class woman as impossible to organize because the middle class woman will not renounce her class interests and privileges. As H put it: "Not all women are our sisters."

Socialist women should therefore be concerned with the organization of working women. Working women are divided into categories or "constituencies" in terms of their occupations, each of which might be organized around the economic exploitation involved in that role. Several constituencies are mentioned as those most likely to be successfully organized: high school and university students (who are perceived as workers in training), office workers, teachers, factory workers. Women on welfare and unwed mothers are also regarded as potential constituencies.

In their definition of "working women" as the group upon which to concentrate their organizational resources, the socialist women appear to have overlooked a distinction based on the values and life style of different categories of working women. By their definition, middle class women are the non-working wives of middle class men. These women are expected to hold hopelessly bourgeois values which inevitably predispose them to reject radical demands. However, several constituencies of working women, including teachers and secretarial workers, by and large perceive themselves as middle class, and are deeply committed to middle class values.

"Working women" sometimes appears to mean "working class women", although apparently not to the non-working wives of skilled craft and





trades workers who are unionized and who have a deep stake in the capitalist system. (In the United States, SDS attempts to organize the urban working class failed because the latter was pro-establishment.)

"Working class women" or "working women" appear to be terms which are used interchangeably to refer to women who: a) work in unskilled and semi-skilled non-unionized jobs (waitress, retail clerk), b) are on welfare, c) are Third World women. These are the segments of society which would spearhead a "people's revolution", and whom the socialist women perceive as those in need of their organizational skills.

#### Tactics: Community Organizing

In mid-November, H and K proposed a "grass roots" strategy, built around organizing constituencies of women in the community.

H. Instead of asking women to come to women's liberation and adopting our stand, we should go to women with problems and use our skills to help them solve their own problems. We don't even need to label ourselves as women's liberation — just do the work, help on issues defined by the women, and politicize them on that basis.

K. The function of women's liberation should be to act as a resource group which will help meet the needs of women. We should help women to organize themselves. We no longer should define the issues, but let others define their own issues, and support them.

This notion of community organizing seemed to be borrowed directly from similar tactics used in the United States by the SDS; in Canada by the CYC (Company of Young Canadians); and the "serve the people" programmes of the Black Panthers and Young Lords.

An inconsistency soon appeared between the theory and practice of SWC with regard to "community organizing". Early discussions in SWC revolved around the proper techniques by which working women could be organized. The perceptions by SWC women of their own role was that they would be "resource personnel", who would provide information regarding





tactics to those women who had no access to such information, and who would perform the tasks of organizing which those women had no time to perform for themselves. The constituency would define the issue, and the SWC would teach them how to solve their problems through socialist analysis and practice.

These discussions ignored a review of the specific skills which they could contribute to other women, although G, who dropped out of SWC meetings very early, remarked wryly, "I don't think we have any skills that other women don't already have; except maybe free time, and nobody seems willing to donate that anyway." The women possessed no training in the techniques of community organizing, nor did they prepare themselves for their task by study. Although they consulted a member of the CYC on the techniques of organization, they did not incorporate his suggestions into their method of operation.

The role of SWC was ostensibly to organize working women around issues defined as relevant by the latter, and in doing so, to "politicize" them to a socialist understanding of their oppression. The specific techniques by which this was to be accomplished were never clarified. Presumably, they would try to influence women through talking to them, and behaving in a manner exemplary of their beliefs. However, the SWC women did not discuss among themselves the possible alternative approaches to the task they had set themselves, including the ways in which they would handle different situations, and responses to themselves, so that their message would have the best chance of acceptance.

At the outset, SWC rejected the opportunity to work at the Transient Women's Shelter, because the policy of the shelter was that volunteers "listened but didn't talk". Since they could not control the situation, and use it to politicize women, they rejected that as a potential



constituency. Instead, they decided to investigate the possibilities of becoming involved in some of the other agencies in the city which dealt with women's issues (e.g. welfare women's rights, day care committees, birth control counselling). Most of the agencies which they investigated had not been set up by the constituencies they purported to serve, but had been set up in accordance with what the provincial government or middle class private interests had defined as relevant issues.

After a brief investigation, the SWC women abruptly decided that they did not want to do community organizing. The initial reason was that the agencies were so firmly entrenched in the bureaucratic structure that there was no point in getting involved. The second reason that emerged, and the more serious one, proved to be a lack of commitment on the part of SWC women. Community organizing was perceived as a full time job. As K said, "If I'm going to be serious about it, I'm going to have to devote a year of my life to it, and I feel that I can't do that. There are too many other things that I enjoy doing that I'd have to give up."

This statement points up the incongruity which was a major factor in SWC. Although the women maintained elements of a socialist ideology, they were incapable of integrating it with their behavior. The reason for this inconsistency of ideal and action appeared to be a strain between the somewhat abstract desire to implement the values of collectivism, and a strong personal commitment to serving their own individual needs. While they stated that they wished to "serve the needs of the people" in any way they could, and wished the women outside WLM to "define their own issues", they themselves could not become committed enough to work on any projects except those which interested themselves as individuals. During the period of the study, they did not seriously look beyond their own Caucus for definitions of any issue, nor beyond their own interests in



organizing.

K. We can only organize around what affects us at a gut level.

H. I don't know if I want to organize other women around issues important to them. I think I would rather work in areas that I'm personally interested in — that I can relate to. I can't relate to working women on their own level and don't really want to get involved with them.

O. I never let myself get committed to anything.

K. The group exists for the needs of the individual as much as vice versa. I would fight for my rights as an individual against the group.

It should be noted that, although their behavior gave the appearance of a somewhat peripheral commitment to their ideology, part of the difficulty which the women were experiencing stemmed from the fact that they were attempting to act in a collective manner and to build communist alternatives within a system antithetical to these values and behaviors, and a structure which makes such solutions difficult to implement pragmatically. They had very limited reinforcement in their attempts to alter their behavior, including a lack of visible role models on whom to pattern themselves, and a lack of consistent support from reference groups.

Such difficulties would tend to be reinforced if the actors themselves still partially subscribed to individualistic values, as these women did. The commitment to individualism is difficult to change, or even to recognize in oneself, if there are few supports available to help facilitate change in a meaningful way. The women had all at some time experimented with communal living. However, they reported that none of these experiences were completely successful, because of the difficulties of dealing with the individualistic orientations of the members within the communal setting. Although they mentioned, when they first formed the Caucus, that they would like to form a residential collective, this





did not materialize during the period of the study.

A related contradiction which the SWC women found difficult to resolve was that of their own middle class backgrounds. As socialists, they specifically rejected bourgeois values and life style as invalid. However, although their own life style could not be called middle class, neither did it follow the pattern of the women whom they defined as "working women". Instead, it followed the pattern of the youth counter-culture, which working class women neither follow nor approve. Also, they admitted to an inability to "relate" to working class women, and demonstrated an inability to empathize with the oppression of older women and of women with children — a particular form of oppression which affects nearly all working class women.

Project: the Transient Women's Hostel

In February, the SWC initiated plans to organize a summer hostel for transient girls, funded by a grant from the federal government. They carried out this project from May through August of 1971, forming what could be termed a work collective to staff the house. Most of the labour was volunteer, although there were enough funds available to provide summer jobs for three of the women. They had little opportunity to politicize the girls using the facilities, since the latter remained at the hostel only briefly, for a period of one or two nights.

It would appear that, rather than identifying themselves with the working class, they identified more naturally with the youth movement, since they were sufficiently able to "relate" to young transient women and girls to run a hostel for the summer. In their terms, to "relate" did not seem to mean to "empathize" with the experiences of others which differed from their own, but to understand those who had had experiences



similar or "related" to their own.<sup>73</sup>

The SWC women did not perceive the taking of federal government funds to start their project as reformist, or as "being bought by the system". They favoured the use of such funds because it was seen as a way of "screwing the system" — as a "rip-off" of money from the system for their own needs and ends. They did not perceive such reliance on government funds as placing themselves in a position of dependence on the system they proposed to destroy, but as undermining it from within — "using the weapons of the system to destroy it". They did not see their ability to organize as contingent upon the willingness of the system to finance them; with the implication that, if the system withdrew its support, they would no longer have the resources to politicize women. On the other hand, they did not examine alternative means of influencing women without the backing of such funds to set up a base of operations.

During the summer, they seemed unable to solve problems within the project in a collective manner. Complaints by one member against another were not discussed within the group, but were lodged in the daily log book. Confrontations were avoided, but so were solutions, and hostilities built up within the group. One attempt was made during the course of the summer to carry out an open discussion of each women's individual feelings and political position. Before this attempt to discuss their differences in a collective manner, and to "fight individualism in a collective way", "breaking down the bourgeois separation of the personal from the political", there had been no explicit statement by any of the women as to how their personal political positions might differ from each other. It had been assumed that they were identical. The discussion, when it did come, proved traumatic to all the members, since these assumptions of similarity proved faulty. The discussion ended with bad feelings



on all sides, apparently because criticisms directed towards each other were perceived as personal and destructive, rather than as political and corrective. Relationships remained strained for the remainder of the summer. With no apparent attempts at resolution within the group, it appeared by the end of the summer that the women might dissolve the group once the project was completed.

#### Preferred Structure for Women's Liberation

The preferred internal structure for their own group was that the original members keep control of any incoming membership by screening them for political affiliation. YS women were excluded from participation, as were other women who were non-socialist. It was felt that only by having total agreement internally with respect to political ideology, could the women work together without discord. They felt that such a stance was justified from the evidence of YS behavior in the Parent Group. Membership, therefore, was supposed to be restricted to those whose political analysis was "pure". The women who joined the three original members of SWC (H, K and O), on their summer project, were drawn from outside the existing WLM structure, belonging neither to YS, the Silent Majority, nor the Rap Group. Although they were all avowed socialists, they were not, as originally assumed, in ideological agreement among themselves, as evidenced by the internal disputes during the summer.

In terms of relationships with other groups, SWC declared as its ideal that it wished to maintain friendly, but independent, relationships with other branches of WLM in Edmonton. In this, it compared itself to the Rap Group -- autonomous, but co-operating where possible on actions that complemented their ideology. Externally, they favoured coalitions with other radical groups, including male groups,<sup>74</sup> although this preference





remained at the ideal rather than the practical level.

Relationship between Socialist Women's  
Caucus and Edmonton Women's Liberation

The ambivalence and conflict within SWC was reflected in its relationships with the rest of WLM in the city. It had been set up originally as an alternative to the existing structures of both the Parent Group and the Rap Group. The founding members felt that they needed an all-encompassing perspective by which to guide their behavior and explain their situation. According to H, "I need an overall strategy or perspective to give some reason and meaning to my actions, rather than continuing to act in a vacuum."

In November, H and K presented their position paper at a general meeting of the Parent Group, advocating that WLM explore socialism as an alternative, and that WLM eventually declare itself a revolutionary socialist movement. The paper received a strongly negative reaction from the rest of the group. YS women and some of the other regulars rejected it on the grounds that such a declaration would be detrimental to the group: 1) by allowing anti-WLM forces to label it "communist" and thereby discrediting it, and 2) by alienating other women who, having a culturally induced fear and mistrust of socialism, would reject the movement. Some outsiders, who were attending their first WLM meeting, openly displayed a vehement rejection of the suggestion to study socialism as an alternative for WLM to explore.

Unknown to the rest of the Parent Group, H and K were presenting their paper with two implicit alternatives: either the Parent Group accept socialism as the ideology for WLM, or H and K would separate from the Parent Group and set up their own organization. The negative reaction which their paper received confirmed for them their intention to separate.



As H said, "I'm not trying to force my interpretation on anyone else, but anything else is meaningless for me."

At the next general meeting, their position was discussed again, and again was strongly criticized by YS. They, in turn, criticized YS and its strategy, rejecting YS as a retarding influence on WLM, and as a deviant form of socialism. Regarding YS's stance on mass movements, O remarked, "We cannot deny an ideology in order to win mass support. We should not allow ourselves to be co-opted in order to attract more women to the movement."

After this meeting, H, K, and O gave themselves the name of Socialist Women's Caucus, and began to hold meetings at a separate time from the general meeting of the whole group. At least six other women showed an initial apparent interest in the meetings of SWC, but within the space of five weeks, the splinter group had only three regular members -- H, K, and O. The Rap Group leaders attended meetings sporadically, but their primary commitment lay with their own group. G, a Marxist, aligned herself with the members of the Silent Majority, who were growing increasingly hostile to the SWC, and resentful of what they perceived was an attempt by SWC to become an elitist organization which deliberately acted to exclude them.

The members of SWC, on the other hand, felt that the other women had not given them a fair chance to explain their position, but had reacted negatively to the word "socialism", without analysing the ideology rationally. They reinforced the perception of exclusionism that the other women had of them, since they attended meetings of the Parent Group only sporadically, then ceased attendance altogether. They did not inform the Parent Group of their decision to separate their organizations completely, but simply ceased interacting with the other women. They



ceased attending general meetings because they were judged "too frustrating, and we get nowhere hassling with YS and people on a lower level of consciousness than ours." Also, as H said, "It seemed that after all the upset over the paper, the best thing we could do was leave the group and let it calm down without starting more trouble." They issued an open invitation to the rest of the women in WLM (barring YS) to attend their meetings, so that they might explain their position more adequately, and insisted among themselves that their group was not a secret one, that anyone could come and talk, and was welcome.

At the same time, they began discussions within the Caucus for setting up projects, and decided that they would not inform anyone in the Parent Group of their decision, preferring instead to have the Parent Group think that they were a study group. They argued that, once the project was functioning adequately, they would invite selected women to come to work with them — if their political position was acceptable. This position was never articulated and agreed upon within SWC itself, but the effects of this did not become apparent until the summer. H commented on the SWC policy towards other women, "If they don't agree with us, they can come down and talk to us. If they do agree, they can join us." They assumed that, if they kept their organizing activities secret, then "invited" some women to join in their successful project, that good relations would then re-emerge between themselves and the rest of WLM, since they would have demonstrated the validity of their ideology by concrete accomplishment.

They perceived that the breakdown in communications was the fault of the Silent Majority women, who refused to discuss their position paper rationally, but rejected it because they were afraid of the label "communist" and the damage it might do the movement. H expressed extreme hurt







that other women in the Parent Group had ceased to communicate with her. However, she felt that it was useless to try to re-establish communication again through her own efforts. H and K compared their own position vis-a-vis the Parent Group to that of the Rap Group. When the Rap Group started, it openly demonstrated its intentions to remain independent of the Parent Group. Although the latter was hostile and suspicious of this stance at first, it had no other alternative but to accept it. When the Rap Group leaders continually stressed that all women were welcome to come to their home and meetings, relations improved.

They apparently did not perceive that their own case differed from that of the Rap Group in at least three ways.

1) The Rap Group had been formed independent of the Parent Group. SWC had belonged to the Parent Group, then broke away.

2) All women were not welcome in SWC. H and K had insisted at the inception of SWC that agreement with their political ideology was a prerequisite for membership in SWC. Many women in the Silent Majority were uncertain of the exact position they were expected to take. From their perspective, they felt that SWC had not adequately explained their position. They had been explicitly told not to join SWC unless they agreed with its ideology — and this statement appeared to influence their reactions more than the ensuing invitations to talk. They were also aware that "talk" did not mean "dialogue", since SWC was only interested in converting them to their point of view.

3) The SWC women did not communicate with the other women to reassure them of their good will. They expressed the preference to keep their own activities secret, and did not attend general meetings, thus effectively isolating themselves from the Parent Group. Their continued absence from general meetings was interpreted by the rest of the women as



a direct snub, a manifestation of a lack of desire on the part of SWC to interact with them. This lack of communication made them very curious about SWC, but at the same time, it was seen as a closed clique which rejected them and discouraged them from participating in it. The lack of communication they interpreted as implying, "If you don't agree with me, you're irrelevant." They rejected the perception of themselves as being of a "lower level of consciousness", and resented the implication that their ideas about WLM were not valid. They felt that it was not up to them to make overtures of reconciliation, since the SWC had initiated both the position paper and the split from the Parent Group. They perceived the secrecy surrounding SWC activities as deliberate attempts to exclude them.

At the end of January, H and K attended a general meeting of the Parent Group, at which they declared that SWC was planning an action, but did not explain what the action was (the youth hostel), saying they preferred to discuss it in their own meetings. They invited other women to come to their next meeting to discuss the political implications of their proposed action. Women should only take part in the action if they agreed with the political reasons for it. The action would not take place in the name of women's liberation, as SWC preferred not to jeopardize their chances of getting funds by using the name of WLM. None of the other women at the general meeting sought any further information, nor did they attend the next SWC meeting. P, one of the Silent Majority women, summed up the response of the women in her faction, by saying "Those socialist women are paranoid to be so secretive about their projects."

Since neither side was willing to open negotiations for reconciliation, the lack of effective communication caused hostilities to deepen between SWC and the Silent Majority, and to remain so during the remainder



of the period of the study. During the height of the bad feeling between the two factions, members from both sides were in communication with A and B of the Rap Group. The latter two women listened to the grievances of both sides, but did nothing towards easing the tension between them. Although open confrontation was avoided by deflecting communication to the Rap Group instead of to each other, there was no effective mediation either, so that no reconciliation or understanding was possible between the two factions.

### Concluding Statement

The goal of the Socialist Women's Caucus, as stated by them, was revolutionary. However, during the period of the study, they were unable to implement tactics which might lead them to that goal. This inability stemmed internally from the inconsistencies of an ideology which was still in its formative stages, and from a concomitant lack of integration of ideology with behavior. Inconsistencies appeared between their individualistic and collectivist values; between their middle class and counter-cultural experiences and life style as opposed to their desire to "declass" themselves; in their analysis of the relationship between capitalism and sexism; and between their own perceptions of their leadership role and others' refusal to accept that role as legitimate. These contradictions combined to prevent this faction from developing alternatives which might implement their goal more effectively.

A further contradiction appeared in the behavior resulting from the perception by SWC women of their own oppression relative to that of other women. In defining their own role as leaders within and outside WLM, the SWC appeared to concentrate on the oppression of other women, rather than their own. The ideal was to "support others" in issues





relevant to others, rather than to take action which arose out of an analysis of their own personal experiences of oppression. However, their behavior did not coincide with this stated ideal, since they did not, in fact, support others, nor move outside WLM to gain an understanding of working class women. They preferred to follow their own interests and carry out projects involving young women to whom they could "relate", based upon a similarity of experience.

On the other hand, they did not perceive themselves as personally oppressed compared to most other women. They were self-supporting, well educated, had no child dependents, and their relationships with men were perceived by them as more equalitarian than those of most women. They seemed to operate in a vacuum, and to be unable to formulate an effective strategy, for these reasons. First, they could not organize around their own issues, since they perceived that they themselves were not personally oppressed. Second, they could not organize other women around issues relevant to the latter, since they could not understand or empathize with the oppression of other women to the extent that they could commit themselves to a serious career of deep involvement with other women.

Their behavior throughout the summer of 1971, in terms of their inability to communicate effectively and to form strong primary group bonds among themselves, resolving their differences through debate and collective decision making, would serve as an additional indication that they had not yet evolved an ideology which met their needs in terms of defining their problems and providing solutions to them. Until the inconsistencies are resolved, and their ideology becomes more fully developed and integrated, it would seem that they would not be able to carry out any effective action, but would remain action oriented in theory, while unable to commit themselves to revolutionary action in fact.



## V. THE FEMINISTS

The third major ideological position was represented within the Rap Group, and could be termed radical feminism, or simply feminism. This perspective was endorsed by A and B, the two women who had originally set up the Rap Group, and it prevailed as the mode of analysis in consciousness raising sessions.<sup>75</sup>

### The Feminist Interpretation of the Sex Role Relationship

Feminism, as a women's liberation ideology, is grounded in the theory of the New Left, as is the ideology of the revolutionary socialists in WLM. It utilizes some of the concepts of political radicalism, but applies them from a unique perspective. Feminism identifies the primary source of female oppression as the system of male dominance. Sexism is not merely behavior, and it is not an unfortunate consequence of the capitalist system. Sexism is itself a system — the system of role relationships between males and females upon which all societies are based. The values, culture, and institutions of society are the tools, not of capitalism, but of the system of male dominance. By using these tools, men retain a position of power over women, and exercise control over them. The subordination of women is necessary in order that men may continue in their position of dominance, since they define their own superiority in terms of the relative inferiority of women. Individually and collectively, men derive explicit sexual, psychological, and economic benefits from the subordination of women. Therefore they have a strong vested interest in maintaining their position of dominance, and will not voluntarily give up their privileges.

Men and women form two distinct classes, distinguished by sexual function, by power, and by privilege. All roles in which males and



females interact oppress and exploit women. Because of the primary and monolithic nature of sex roles, there can be no equalitarian relationships between individual men and women. Men derive such benefits from the system as it exists that they do not want to engage in equalitarian relationships. Even if an individual male wished to engage in equalitarian relationships with women, he would be penalized by other men. For example, he might be labelled "hen pecked" or a "faggot". If it appeared that he could not "control" his wife, he might be considered "not a real man", as he might also if he refused to engage in locker room exchanges concerning his sexual conquests (or fantasies). The sanctions which other men exert on potentially deviant behavior from members of their own group, serve as effective deterrents to equalitarian behavior on the part of men. It follows from this analysis that all women are oppressed, all are oppressed equally (since men define them all in essentially the same way), and no woman may be liberated as long as the present system of role relationships continues in existence. Women are, in essence, the first and most basic form of property and profit for the male.

#### The "Proximal" Orientation of Feminism

The concepts of "system" and "class" are borrowed from the radical Left. The application in terms of a male/female relationship which is totally power defined is distinctive to feminism. Such an application contains in it an additional feature which is not found in the ideology of socialist women's liberationists. Feminism tends to have a strongly "personalized" or "proximal" orientation.

Socialist women tend to have a "distal" orientation, in that they perceive women's oppression in an abstract way. Although they can see specific consequences of the capitalist system on a personal level (e.g.





low paying jobs, unemployment), the sources of the problem situation are perceived as abstracts or institutions — "corporate capitalism", "imperialism", "General Motors", "consumerism", "the Beast". Individuals tend to be seen as instruments which are moved by impersonal "forces".

On the other hand, feminists perceive that institutions are the instruments by which individuals are oppressed or oppress others. The problem source is identified as immediate, intimate, and personal in its manifestations. The distant, faceless "owners-of-the-means-of-production" are not the beneficiaries of the system. In the life of every woman, concrete, individual men are gaining concrete, readily observable benefits of the system. The boyfriend, the husband, the boss, the men who make comments on the street corner — the men with whom women interact on a daily basis are profiting from their exploitation.

This point was evident in the self-perceptions of the women who took part in the rap sessions. SWC women tended to perceive themselves as somewhat privileged, as less oppressed than many other women, especially working class women. Their attention tended to be directed outwards, focussing on the oppression of other women whom they perceived as more oppressed than they, and in need of their leadership and direction. Women in the Rap Group, on the other hand, tended to perceive themselves as personally oppressed in their relationships with men. They saw themselves as the hub of a network of oppression, manifested in their relationships and experiences. They were highly sensitive to any behavior on the part of males which might be interpreted as sexist.

#### Stated Goal

From this perspective emerges another feature of feminist ideology. The area of reference for change also becomes proximal. Rather than



perceiving that her own position is relatively non-oppressive, and that change should occur primarily in other sectors of society, the feminist perceives that the emphasis should be one of changing her own life on a personal scale, to develop techniques which will better enable her to understand and cope with her own oppression. As an early feminist position paper stated, "We do not become radicalized fighting other people's battles." Feminism follows the principle that, by exploring one's own experience of oppression, one can understand and come to grips with the total system of oppression. The focus of Rap Groups is thus inward rather than outward-looking. They do not regard themselves as the liberating agents of other constituencies of women, e.g. working class women. Their first task is to comprehend their own oppression. This is the first essential step that must precede any other revolutionary action they might attempt in the future. For these reasons, rap sessions are often labelled by socialists as "group therapy" or "bitch sessions" for women who are only concerned with themselves, and not with the larger, more important oppression of other women less fortunate than themselves.

Another characteristic of feminism is its criticism of socialism as the vehicle for attainment of women's liberation. It is believed that socialism might be a better alternative than capitalism, but it is also believed that socialism perpetuates the inequalities between males and females. As one member put it, "The relationship between men and women is one of power, and men will not give up that power through a political revolution." B stated that Chinese and Russian women have not been liberated, and that it is not easier to be liberated in socialist countries. "If I were in Cuba advocating the kinds of changes for women that I am now, I would be considered counter-revolutionary. I wouldn't want to be a woman in Cuba today. It would be harder for women's liberation to exist



under socialism than here." A remarked, "Capitalism is not the enemy."

An article by Ellen Willis, a feminist writer in the United States, stated the same theme.

Femaleness, like blackness, is a biological fact, a fundamental condition. Like racism, male supremacy permeates all strata of this society. And it is even more deeply entrenched. Whites are at least defensive about racism; men — including most radicals, black and white — are proud of their chauvinism. Male supremacy is the oldest form of domination and the most resistant to change.<sup>76</sup>

An anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist analysis is insufficient for our purposes. Women's oppression antedated capitalism by some 2000 years and has outlasted it in socialist countries.<sup>77</sup>

### Proposed Strategy for Women's Liberation

In contrast to working for women through socialism, feminism advocates working for women as its sole priority, with no conditions attached. If the interests of socialism conflict with the interests of women, the latter must be upheld against the former. As A put it, "I consider myself a woman first, and a human being second." She declared that women and their needs were her priority — they must come before men and their needs. Since men and men's needs usually receive priority, this reversal of priorities involves a lessening of interaction with and interest in men, sometimes to the exclusion of voluntary interaction with males. Stemming from the perception of women as of primary importance and of relationships with men as secondary, comes a willingness to explore living arrangements which do not involve men. A, B and C lived in the "Women's House" as an all female family. In feminist literature, alternatives such as all female communes, homosexual relationships, and voluntary celibacy have all been discussed.<sup>78</sup>

Feminism is "female oriented" in another way. There has been a strong tendency within the non-feminist branches of WLM to deny the







"feminine" stereotype outright, and to identify stereotyped male characteristics and behavior as desirable, e.g. the alleged ability of males to think logically, to be aggressive. Some women have attempted to "masculinize" themselves in order to demonstrate that women are "no different" from men.

Feminism, on the other hand, has a different perception of the female stereotype. Male characteristics and behavior are dismissed as inferior and downright pathological. For example, the male emphasis on logical, pragmatic, manipulative thought patterns is perceived as orienting the male to destructive attitudes and behavior towards his environment, and to obsessions with controlling and manipulating other people for his own benefit.

Characteristics and behavior that are allegedly female, however, are interpreted in two ways.<sup>79</sup> Some characteristics that have been labelled as undesirable from the point of view of the dominant group — women's overconcern with their physical appearance (vanity); their dislike of each other; their nagging, whining and "bitchiness"; their withholding of sexual services — are all perceived by the feminists as characteristics which have been imposed upon women because of their subordination. They are the responses by which a subordinate group copes with its position. They are the only means of self-defence and expressions of aggression which are available to the subordinate group in its relationship to the dominant group.<sup>80</sup> Women are concerned about their appearance because their physical appearance is of great importance in determining their life chances — i.e. finding a male to support them and give them an identity. They dislike each other because they perceive themselves in cutthroat competition for men, and also because they have been socialized to believe that women are inferior and they prefer to



identify with the dominant group. Nagging and sexual withholding are techniques by which they may express hostility and extract some compensations from the oppressor.

Other elements of the female stereotype are accepted by the feminists as intrinsic to the female personality — and far superior to men. The alleged ability of women to think "intuitively", to feel and express deep emotion, to nurture, are examples of characteristics which are accepted by feminists as positive, natural, and more essentially "human" than are male personality traits and behavior.

In this element of their ideology, the feminists resemble black cultural nationalists, who reject the values and character of the white, and elevate some of the stereotyped characteristics of blacks, which they perceive as positive, to the level of a "natural" phenomenon, while dismissing others as artificially imposed upon them by the system of racism.

Both groups have essentially ceased to deny the stereotypes of their own subordinate groups. The dominant group has labelled their characteristics as indicators of their inferiority. They have rejected the legitimacy of the dominant group's perception of themselves. They have turned the tables, accepting the characteristics as their own, but have attached a positive, rather than a negative evaluation to their self-definition, and have transferred that negative evaluation to their definition of the dominant group. Such mechanisms might be perceived as techniques whereby members of the subordinate group may cultivate feelings of self-worth to combat the feelings of self-hatred instilled in them by the oppressive system into which they have been socialized.<sup>81</sup>

Although feminism rejects the socialist solution as a viable one for women, it does endorse the ideal of revolution. Like socialist women's liberationists, the feminist wing emerged from the radical Left,



and retains the perception that the system is resistant to change from within, and must be forced to change from outside the regular channels.

The feminists perceive that a political revolution will inevitably occur, spearheaded by the black movement and the offshoot of the SDS — Weatherman. They do not perceive women's liberation as a "third force" or constituency taking part in that revolution. Instead, women's liberation is perceived as an independent movement operating in the interests of all women. This position is articulated by Ellen Willis in her statement:

We have come to see women's liberation as an independent revolutionary movement, potentially representing half the population. We intend to make our own analysis of the system and put our interests first, whether or not it is convenient for the (male dominated) Left. Although we may co-operate with radical men on matters of common concern, we are not simply part of the Left. We do not assume that radical men are our allies or that we want the same kind of revolution they want.<sup>82</sup>

The Rap Group leaders distrusted radical men, claiming that they were all on "ego trips", i.e. using their power to manipulate others for personal gain and satisfaction. As A stated, "The only men I consider might be equalitarian are revolutionary men, and I've never met any real revolutionary men. For most of them, it's an ego trip."

Women's liberation, and women, can and should operate independent of male radical organizations, and men. Socialists claim that the feminist position is logically faulty, that the feminists "...fail to see the women's struggle as part of the proletarian struggle and...concentrate on men as the main enemy rather than imperialism".<sup>83</sup> This "separatism", as it is critically termed by socialists, is perceived as necessary by the feminists if women are to gain self-determination.

Such a movement will accomplish two things: 1) in the words of Ellen Willis, "They (radical men) will support our revolution only when





we build an independent movement so strong that no revolution at all is possible without our cooperation."<sup>84</sup>, 2) after the revolution, women cannot be ignored, because they will form a power bloc. As A put it, "With a revolutionary women's movement, when the revolution comes, we will have our foot in the door of power." The movement must be independent, however, or it will be co-opted in the interests of "the larger good" i.e. men's welfare, as women have been in other socialist revolutions — used during the revolution, and ignored afterwards by the men who gained power.

In line with their general orientation, feminists would limit the formation of coalitions. They would not consider the formation of coalitions with groups controlled by males. As A remarked, "Men will never be isolated, but as far as I'm concerned, I will always isolate men, both personally and politically." They would form coalitions to work with other women's groups on women's issues which they deem relevant.

In terms of proposed strategy, the feminists perceive that their primary task lies in organizing women, but their approach to organizing differs basically from that of YS and SWC. In line with their "personalized" view of female oppression, they do not tend to divide women into constituencies, to be organized and politicized on issues of relevance to each constituency. They instead begin from the premise that women, as a class, all suffer basically the same oppression. While their experiences and relationships are individual, they are all similar, because they are manifestations of the same phenomenon.

#### Membership Base for Women's Liberation

Following from this, the membership base for women's liberation should be non-exclusionary. All women are sisters; all women are bound



together by common class interests and common experiences, the primary one being that of personal exploitation in their relationships with men; exploitation which follows a common pattern throughout the lives of all women, despite its individual surface appearance. Unlike the Parent Group, the Rap Group leaders consciously made it a policy to state that their programme was based on the concept of "sisterhood". The closest anyone came to defining this term was A, who stated that "sisters don't fuck each other over." Basically, the term seemed to mean a lack of oppression or exploitation of women by women; a non-critical acceptance of and attempt to understand women as they exist as products of a certain life experience, and a refusal to use or manipulate them.

#### Preferred Structure for Women's Liberation

The preferred structure for WLM is that of the small group of 8 - 12 women, who meet weekly in "rap sessions" or discussion groups. These cells are intended to develop internally, then to expand in a mushroom effect, with the women in the original group contacting additional women to form the nuclei of new groups, which will in turn expand to "spread the word", forming a web of small, co-ordinated groups. In the city, the Rap Group expanded from one to five during the period of the study. The small group structure is deemed necessary if all the women are to have the opportunity to participate equally and in a face-to-face relationship with the other members of the group. The emphasis on intensive interaction based on honesty and trust is feasible only within the small group setting.

#### Tactics: Consciousness Raising

Within the small group, at the rap sessions, women engage in an intensive process of "consciousness raising". To raise one's consciousness



essentially means to become aware of one's oppression and its sources, and to develop trust (class consciousness) among the women in the group. Once this awareness and understanding have been achieved, they become the foundation upon which alternative lines of action may be considered by which the members may successfully overcome their oppression. This understanding is the first step in developing a basis for revolutionary change. The process of achieving awareness is facilitated by each woman "testifying", or discussing her own specific situation. From her own testimony and that of the other women in the group, the individual member comes to realize that her problems are not really individual, but common to all women, therefore stemming from a common source, therefore political in nature and calling for political (i.e. social) solutions.

Several terms used by the Rap Group leaders seemed to indicate that they were primarily interested in developing close personal relationships among small groups of women as a necessary basis for future, action oriented kinds of behavior. Revolutionary action cannot occur, according to their ideology, without a stable foundation of trust based on mutual understanding and common ideology. The Rap Group leaders used the terms "love" and "trust", seemingly to imply the necessity of breaking down the bonds of physical and emotional isolation in which women tend to live, and replacing them with primary group relationships among women.

However, it later became evident that these terms were used in a totally different context. "Love" did not mean personal, individual ties of affection. It referred to the concept of "revolutionary love" or "loving detachment" — which was a more analytical term meaning devotion and commitment to an ideology. In B's words: "It isn't love for individuals, but love that evolves among people who believe in the same things, have a common enemy, and are attempting to overthrow it and replace it





with another goal." A added, "If a personal relationship between two individuals becomes so strong that it interferes with the attainment of the larger goal or values, then that relationship would not be one of revolutionary love." Concern for the human condition was best articulated through commitment to goals which would improve that condition.

Similarly, the term "trust" referred not to the trust growing out of mutual dependency of a personal relationship. Following from the definition of "love", it referred instead to the trust between those who are committed to the same ideology and goals. With such common commitment to an ideology, behavior may also be counted upon to be consistently trustworthy in the service of that ideology. Trust is not given on the basis of what an individual says, but emerges from an understanding of the past experiences of the individual. The individual can be brought to a proper understanding of the causes of her oppression only from an analysis of her own experiences. Hence, the necessity to "rap", to engage in discussion and analysis of one's own and others' experiences in small groups. When trust results from a correct understanding of oppression and commitment to a goal which will eliminate that oppression, only then will women be able to take effective action to bring about that change, knowing that they will be mutually supported by those who believe as they do.

Several statements by the Rap Group leaders illustrate their organizational tactics and the reasons for them.

A. The first requirement for women's liberation is self-awareness.

B. I used to feel that I was alone in my problems with men, but when I find it repeated, and find it repeated in other women here, I know I'm not abnormal.

A. Although it may on the surface appear that some women accept their oppression, they really have no alternatives. Because



it is all they have, they are forced to defend it, since they have no alternatives to that self-concept.

- A. We have a revolutionary goal, and consciousness raising is our way of helping women attain the first step towards revolutionary consciousness. After that comes revolutionary action, but we haven't yet reached that point. Our group is working on the underlying causes of oppression.

The feminists reject the label often used by the detractors of rap sessions, that of "group therapy". That label implies that the women engaging in rap sessions are mentally ill, that they have individual, psychological problems to be worked out in terms of "adjustment". In reality, according to the feminists, their problems are social, and call, not for the adjustment of the women, but for the adjustment of their social environment. The responses of women have grown out of their experiences as members of a subordinate group and can be explained in that context. In this, the feminists borrow from the ideology of the New Left - "collective" rather than individual solutions.

The function of the sessions is to politicize the individuals participating in them. Once the goal of consciousness raising has been achieved and the individual has reached a state of self-awareness, it is assumed that radical action will occur in the form of a change in the individual's life style. According to B, "The point is to come to a realization of how we, as individuals, are oppressed as women in our daily lives; and once we come to that self-awareness, then we can cope with it on an individual level in our own homes." In A's words, "Life changes through living."

This latter statement reflects the New Left ideology in which the means to an end become the end itself.<sup>85</sup> Social change is believed to be brought about by change in the life styles of many individuals. It might be noted at this point that no fixed picture was presented by the



Rap Group leaders as to what would constitute the revolution, or what shape society would take afterwards. The merging of means and ends was indicated once in A's speculative statement: "Rather than perceiving the revolution as beginning and ending, we might regard it as infinite process." Life changes through living. Action arises out of one's own experiences, mediated by an understanding of their political nature.

Such an orientation would perhaps lead to the assumption that the revolution is perceived as one of values. Several of the Rap Group members expressed such a belief.

R. A change in life style based on a change in values is the only real solution.

S. I don't like the idea of a violent revolution. The revolution should be a revolution in values. Women should all change their values and force men to do the same.

A, on the other hand, felt that not all the necessary changes could be brought about by "changing people's heads". She had ambivalent personal feelings about violence; partly she disliked the idea, partly she "grooved" on the idea. However, she was certain that some violent change would be necessary for the political sector of the revolution to be implemented. She agreed with the tactics of the Panthers and Weatherman.

Participation in that phase of the revolution was a matter for speculation about the future. The immediate priority was to make women aware of their own oppression and to bring about grass-roots change in their lives. The focus of the Rap Groups centered on individual male/female relationships. Rap Group leaders testified about their oppressive relationships with males in the past. Other members were encouraged by their example to recount similar experiences. Those who were not yet "aware" of their oppressive relationships were encouraged to see them as such. In the course of the rap sessions, several women stated that they





had been extremely dissatisfied with their relationships with men in the past, that they had ceased to live with a man, and would never consider living with a man again. Because of the class nature of such relationships, they must all, by definition, be oppressive.

F. All men are impossible to relate to. We should all become aware of the multitude of ways they oppress us, and of the ways in which we need them, so we can combat any tendencies to weakness on our part.

A. Although on the surface, a man's dislike of a woman may be personal, it is really sexist, since all the things that the man doesn't like are usually those traits in a woman that threaten him as a male.

The strong emphasis on raising women's consciousness to perceive their personal relationships as oppressive, the advice given to women undergoing difficulties in their relationships with men to sever those relationships, and the example of three of the rap leaders in setting up an all-female family, all indicated that the primary program of the feminists was to attempt to make women independent of men. In this respect, they carried the socialist program of destruction of the monogamous patriarchal family one step further — not only to eliminate the nuclear family, but to eliminate male/female relationships based on the dependency needs of females for male recognition and support.

Although the Rap Group leaders had no formal policy of categorizing women into constituencies,<sup>86</sup> through their recruiting patterns and the self-selection of members, a distinct category of membership did emerge in the Rap Group. Many of the regular members attending rap sessions tended to perceive their personal relationships with men as unsatisfactory. Several had experienced separations or divorces. Others were currently experiencing problems in maintaining their personal relationships. It might be mentioned that in some cases it was impossible to tell if the negative attitudes of the regular members towards their own



relationships began before their involvement in the Rap Group, or emerged through its influence. That is, it could not be determined to what extent regular members came to perceive their relationships as problematic only after joining the Rap Group.

Most of the women at the sessions tended, and were encouraged, to regard all men as oppressors, and to provide "testimony" from their own negative experiences with men. Pressure was put on all women to concede that all heterosexual relationships were oppressive. This pressure was applied to the researcher on occasion, and also to several other women at sessions she attended. For example, D was invited to tell about her oppression in her relationship to her man in order to confirm a statement by B that all women are oppressed in their personal relationships. D refused to validate this claim, at which point she was asked, "Don't you think that you take the responsibility for the relationship, except when you are pushed to a certain point beyond which you won't go, and get angry. The fact that you let yourself be pushed so far indicates that you do take responsibility for it." The implication of this statement was that women, in "taking responsibility for a relationship", must acquiesce to the needs, demands, and whims of the male, with no reciprocal consideration from the male. Thus, they are continually forced to make concessions which are essentially degrading to them. They must "do all the giving". By statements such as these, the rap leaders were attempting to "raise consciousness" — to bring a woman to the point where she perceives and admits that she is being personally oppressed. The implications of such statements were that, even if a woman insists that she is not oppressed, she really is but doesn't realize it yet. She will, for the male will eventually "give himself away" and reveal his true nature as a male supremacist.



Other women from the Parent Group stated to the researcher that they had gone to one rap session and never returned because of such pressures. These women usually had a strong commitment to their personal relationships, which they perceived as satisfactory, or at least workable. Other women, who were having difficulties in their relationships with men, and who went to sessions or to the Women's House to talk were invariably given the same advice. In the words of one woman, "At A and B's rap sessions, whenever women bring up personal problems they are having with their men, the only advice they are given is to walk out on the relationship." In at least three cases of which the researcher had information, the women rejected this advice, largely because it did not take into consideration their own perceptions of the alternatives available to them.

#### The Issue of Female Homosexuality

A final major issue orientation or priority of the feminist program is that of female homosexuality. The movement for Gay Liberation has led to the emergence of an ideological faction which terms itself Radicalesbians. Radicalesbians, and other homosexual women, have found the feminist ideology congenial, and some have joined WLM, partly influenced by a perception of discrimination at the hands of male homosexuals in the Gay Liberation movement. As mentioned earlier, female homosexual relationships have been considered as an alternative to "colonial" male/female relationships in the feminist literature.

However, the major impact which lesbianism has had on WLM has not been personal, but distinctly political. Since the inception of WLM as a movement, its male detractors have always used the label "lesbian" in an attempt to discredit the movement, and to frighten other women from





joining. The researcher was present in the audience at a women's liberation teach-in where the men sitting next to her described one of the women on stage as a "butch" and a "dyke" — both as an insult to women, and as a rationalization to discredit her comments about equal pay for equal work. This technique of implying, or accusing, women of sexual conduct which is not in line with official mores, is quite similar to that used by white supremacists who maintained that white female civil rights workers engaged in illicit intercourse with black men. The racist myth runs, "if you leave a white woman and a black man alone for five minutes, there's no telling what might happen." As Judith Brown put it:

The charge of homosexuality...stands for a fear of something greater, as did the charge of communism against southern blacks and whites getting together; that they might get together. An indigenous movement of any people determined to gain their liberation is a more serious threat than "communism" or "homosexuality", and the charge is merely a delaying tactic to obstruct organization.<sup>87</sup>

Socialist women in WLM have often reacted to the accusation of homosexuality by denying any connection with Radicalesbians and lesbianism. Some have termed lesbians "the lunatic fringe" of WLM, others have expressed the belief that lesbians should confine their activities to Gay Liberation, because they give WLM "a bad name". Many choose to ignore the issue.

Feminists, on the other hand, perceive that the issue of lesbianism is of vital political concern to the movement. It was one of the themes which the Rap Group leaders mentioned at several times during the year, both in rap sessions, and in an article to the local newsletter, challenging WLM in Edmonton to explain why they ignored and avoided the issue. Some of the women were quite bewildered by this, insisting that since they didn't even know any lesbians, that the issue was of no concern to them.



The Rap Group leaders explained that lesbianism should be understood by all women in the movement as politically relevant. Lesbians are oppressed in society, but they are also oppressed by women in WLM. They tend to discredit lesbians because men use that charge as the ultimate attempt to discredit WLM. Women in WLM are eager to dissociate themselves politically from lesbians, because they feel that lesbians alienate outside support from the movement. However, women cannot liberate themselves at the expense of one segment of their population. All women must be liberated, hence lesbianism is an issue which should be politically, even if not personally, endorsed.

The members of the Women's House stated at a local conference in April that they intended in the fall to organize a Rap Group of "woman identified women", which is a term used by lesbians to refer to themselves.<sup>88</sup> Lesbians appeared to be the only group of women which were accorded the status of a constituency by the feminists.

Some excerpts from a Radicalesbian article, "The Woman-Identified Woman", might give an idea of the feminist ideology from the lesbian perspective.

As long as the label "dyke" can be used to frighten women into a less militant stand, keep her separate from her sisters, keep her from giving primacy to anything other than men and family — then to that extent she is controlled by the male culture. Until women see in each other the possibility of a primary commitment which includes sexual love, they will be denying themselves the love and value they readily accord to men, thus affirming their second-class status. As long as male acceptability is primary — both to individual women and to the movement as a whole — the term lesbian will be used effectively against women. Insofar as women want only more privileges within the (male) system they do not want to antagonize male power. They instead seek acceptability for women's liberation, and the most crucial aspect of that acceptability is to deny lesbianism — i.e. deny any fundamental challenge to the basis of the female role.<sup>89</sup>

By virtue of having been brought up in a male society, we have internalized the male culture's definition of ourselves. That definition views us as relative beings who exist not for ourselves,





but for the servicing, maintenance and comfort of men....In exchange for our psychic servicing and for performing society's non-profitmaking functions, the man confers on us just one thing: the slave status which makes us legitimate in the eyes of the (male) society in which we live....He confirms his image of us — of what we have to be in order to be acceptable by him—but cannot confirm our personhood, our own selves as absolutes. As long as we are dependent on the male culture for this definition, for this approval, we cannot be free.<sup>90</sup>

As long as we cling to the idea of "being a woman", we will sense some conflict with that incipient self, that sense of I, that sense of a whole person. It is very difficult to realize and accept that being "feminine" and being a whole person are irreconcilable. Only women can give each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men....Our energies must flow toward our sisters, and not backwards towards our oppressors. As long as women's liberation tries to free women without confronting the basic heterosexual structure that binds us in one-to-one relationships with our own oppressors, tremendous energies will continue to flow into trying to straighten up each particular relationship with a man, how to get better sex, how to turn his head around — into trying to make the "new man" out of him, in the delusion that this will allow us to be the "new woman".<sup>91</sup>

#### Definition of the Feminist Role

The Rap Group leaders defined their own role as one of laying the essential groundwork of self-awareness for women's liberation, among as large a proportion of the female population as they could reach. In their estimation, consciousness raising through "rapping" was the only method by which women could achieve the necessary preparation for radical action. They perceived that they had a "higher level of consciousness" than the members of the Parent Group, because they felt that they had grasped the essential analysis of WLM, and the necessary techniques to solve the problem of women's oppression.

Within the Rap Group, a distinction could be made between the discussion leaders and the general members who attended sessions, and even between the leaders themselves. A and B were both strongly feminist in orientation. C, D and E, who started new Rap Groups, were avowedly





revolutionary socialists, but appeared to be trying to incorporate elements of feminism into their ideology. Because the researcher was only able to attend rap sessions led by A and B, the material on the feminists is based on the study of only part of the Rap Group membership — and that part directly controlled by the feminists rather than by the socialist women. Therefore, it is not known if they organized their rap sessions around the same principles, and how much influence A and B had over the way they were run, although the researcher knew that A and B participated in the initial stages of setting up each of the new Rap Groups.

In the sessions which the researcher attended, A and B exerted a great deal of control over the direction of the sessions. They both, on several occasions, expressed deep satisfaction with consciousness raising and with the tactic of "rapping". They were both strongly committed to consciousness raising, as evidenced by their statements regarding women as their "priority", by the stated availability of their home to women, and by their decision to cease interaction with men.

Aside from satisfaction with "rapping" from the point of view of raising consciousness, it would appear that the role of Rap Group leader had its own personal satisfactions. During the sessions, they were the hub of conversation. They introduced topics to discuss, and provided pertinent examples from their own experiences. Most of the interaction in the sessions was between the leaders and individual members. The members looked to them to provide the analysis of their experiences, and to confirm their own statements. The rap leaders provided the definitive answers for the other members. They directed them towards a perception of their problems as originating from "political" rather than "psychological" sources.



The Rap Group leaders played a role which was satisfactory because it gave them control of a situation, the attention and respect of other women, and the opportunity to act as a source of knowledge and support for other women. Although feminism subscribes to equalitarianism as a value, the Rap Group leaders seemed to perceive that their role did involve the obligation to direct, control, and provide a definitive ideological analysis for other women. This was evidenced in B's comments to C and E when they were organizing their rap sessions, and were expressing the wish to be considered "just members of the group", instead of leaders, "so we could all sort of learn from each other." This was perceived by B as an inaccurate perception on the part of the other two women concerning the role of a leader. She stated, "But you are the leader. You'll have to make yourself understand that. You can't pretend that you don't know more than they do."

The Rap Group leaders also controlled the flow of communication between their own membership and the Parent Group. Since they kept informed of the activities of the Parent Group, and their membership remained in almost total isolation from the Parent Group, they assumed the role of mediating communications and interpreting the activities of the Parent Group to their own membership. On several occasions, the researcher observed Rap Group members ask the leaders to explain to them certain actions or positions of the Parent Group. Some were not aware of the different factions in the Parent Group, nor the circumstances of the disintegration of the Parent Group, until they obtained information, on request, from the rap leaders.

The membership of the Rap Groups relied on A and B to provide the feminist analysis. Most of them seemed to have adopted elements of socialism into their own personal belief systems, as indicated by frequent



references to "the revolution". However, they were not unanimous in their views of what the revolution would consist. Although the three women who set up their own Rap Groups were declared revolutionary socialists (although they declined to take part in SWC), many of the other members appeared to be "utopian socialists", who regarded socialism as the ideal social system, but were unwilling to endorse the use of violence to achieve that goal, preferring to believe that it would evolve gradually through a change in values in the society.

The other differences that appeared to exist between the Rap Group leaders and the rest of the membership, was one of interpretation of some of the basic concepts of feminism. A and B gave a political meaning to such terms as "love", "trust", and "sisterhood". The general members appeared to give these terms a personal meaning.

In one instance, T, a woman who had lived for a time in the Women's House, indicated that she felt that "trust" and "sisterhood" were not manifesting themselves in the Rap Group. Although not a member of the group of "regulars" who attended the Sunday night rap sessions, she received permission to sit in on one of the sessions. At this session, A and B gave a report on the November local conference which they had attended at H's house. T, who had also attended the conference, noticed that their report was "incomplete", and proceeded to fill in the gaps to prevent distortion of what had actually occurred. Before she had completed her version of the report, A told her "You know, you're not in this rap group, so you really don't have any right to say anything." T ceased to attend any more sessions of the Rap Group, feeling that A and B were manipulating the other women, and that they were not adhering to the principles of "trust" and "sisterhood" of which they so often spoke. Her understanding of the terms was personal — that "sisters" are totally honest with







each other, and supportive of each other. A possible explanation of A and B's behavior lay in their use of the terms in a political sense — that loyalty lay with an ideology rather than with individuals, and part of their ideology involved a rejection of the validity of the Parent Group and its activities.

In another case, a member of SWC, highly agitated and emotionally upset by a personal crisis, went to the Women's House, where she expected to find acceptance. As she said, "They're always talking about sisterhood, and supporting each other." Instead of support, she was told that the residents of the house didn't have time to talk to her, because they were entertaining another woman for lunch. This proved to her satisfaction that "sisterhood", at least within the Rap Group, was hypocritical. This incident, when reported to the rest of the members of SWC, created the beginnings of somewhat strained relations between the two groups.

Adherence to a political principle took precedence over personal friendship in another instance. When D got married, A and B refused to visit her in her home, because they disapproved of her life style. Any interaction between the women was therefore limited to the Women's House, where A and B were in control of the situation.

The Rap Group leaders had developed an ideology which, from their perspective, was both internally consistent, and which could be consistently applied to their own life style. There was some difficulty, however, in applying it to the life style of other women, many of whom were unable or unwilling to sever their personal relationships with men. Although some women stated that they would never again become involved on a personal level with men, others expressed dissatisfaction with the solution which A and B proposed to their personal oppression.



The failure of many of the women to renounce their relationships with men could be explained in terms of the alternatives which they perceived as available to them. They would not be inclined to leave the men, nor to push the relationship to the point where the men might leave, if they perceived that it would be too costly to do so. Although the women tended to be economically independent, they often retained an emotional dependency, and a rather wistful ideal of "love" between a man and a woman as the solution to all objective inequalities. One piece of advice given by B was that women could "constantly remind the man we live with that he is acting in a chauvinist way, and so force him to change his behavior." The resistance by the male to such tactics might be so great that the woman could easily perceive it as less costly to "sit it out" rather than attempt to force change in the relationship. When discussing the advice given by A and B to a girl to leave her man (he beat her regularly), K commented, "Maybe it's better to have someone beat you every night than to be alone."

A and B appeared insensitive to these perceptions which other women had of their alternatives. They were sophisticated enough in their analysis to be aware of such perceptions, but were unwilling or unable to grant their validity within the framework of their own ideology and experience.

B once remarked that she had been disappointed in the rap sessions, because some women had only attended one session, then criticized them to other women, but had never voiced those criticisms to A and B personally. The criticisms had come to the Rap Group leaders second hand. This followed the pattern of the SWC and Silent Majority women — aversion of direct confrontation and disagreement, and a deflection of grievances to neutral parties, who would carry the reports to the opposing faction.



B seemed unable to think of any reason why such behavior was occurring. The major criticism which the researcher heard made on several occasions was that A and B "can only advise women to walk out on their relationships". Following from this criticism, a possible explanation of the women's behavior was that they did perceive themselves as oppressed in their personal relationships, but were not prepared to incur the high costs of attempting to force a change in behavior on the part of their men, or of taking the irrevocable step of leaving. Attending rap sessions would only lend reinforcement to the belief that they were oppressed, and further exposure to an alternative which they simply could not perceive as available to them. It might conceivably be easier to resolve conflict over the situation, by ceasing to attend rap sessions and the exposure to the alternative suggestion. The rigidity with which A and B held their attitudes would tend to preclude open disagreement, especially if the women had witnessed, or even experienced, the pressures exerted in rap sessions to "encourage" them to conform to the feminist ideology.

#### Relationship between the Rap Group and Edmonton Women's Liberation

Although for the first several months of the study, the Rap Group was perceived by the Parent Group to be peripheral to WLM, it perceived itself from its inception as the center, the "true" manifestation of WLM. YS women voiced disapproval of the Rap Group from the outset, declaring that it had no revolutionary purpose. The SWC also perceived the Rap Group as somehow outside the main body of WLM. As H commented, "I don't think that most of the women in the Rap Groups are in women's liberation." As far as the Rap Group was concerned, participation in their sessions was the indication of real participation in WLM. The Silent Majority women





at first expressed distrust over the idea of "rapping", and "couldn't understand what purpose it would serve".

For their part, the leaders of the Rap Group made several statements indicating hostility to the tactics used by the Parent Group. As B put it, the formal "parliamentary procedure" and the rigid structure of the business meetings made it impossible for women to develop group solidarity and consensus. "Most women feel that they are just bodies to be used as demonstrators and work horses, and aren't given a share in planning or decision making", was the statement made to describe the situation of the Silent Majority women in the Parent Group. B teasingly remarked to one woman who attended meetings downtown, "You've got remarkable stamina to keep going down there." When projects such as the guerrilla theatre failed, it was attributed to the fact that the women in it didn't "rap" first, "to find out where they were in relation to each other." When the Parent Group split into factions, there was some sympathy expressed for the Silent Majority women, whom the Rap Group leaders felt had been rejected by SWC.

During the course of the study, the Rap Group remained independent of the rest of WLM in Edmonton. Although B suggested in November of 1970 that the Women's House be considered part of the larger group, this supposed integration did not weaken the autonomy of the Rap Group. Its participation in activities sponsored by the Parent Group was minimal, beyond supporting the demonstrations connected with the abortion campaign.

While maintaining an atmosphere of independence from the Parent Group, the Rap Group openly and consistently made the invitation to all women to come and visit the Women's House at any time. By the spring of 1971, many Silent Majority women had attended rap sessions and/or spent time visiting over coffee. After the local conference held in April at



the Women's House, relations with some of the YS women improved greatly.<sup>92</sup> Although communication lines were kept open between the Rap Group leaders and the SWC, relations were more strained, because of personal animosities between K of the SWC, and some of the Rap Group leaders.

In the early spring of 1971, the Rap Group began to emerge as more central in the activities of WLM in Edmonton. The rap leaders organized all the fund raising activities to send delegates to the first international WLM conference, held in Vancouver in April 1971. At this time, they were in contact with representatives from the Voice of Women, who originated the conference as a means by which a delegation of North Vietnamese and other Indochinese women might meet members of women's liberation and Third World women in North America.<sup>93</sup>

Two of the rap leaders, A and D, went to a planning conference at Portland, Oregon, as representatives of WLM in Edmonton, to participate in organizing the structure of the Vancouver conference. C, one of the residents in the Women's House, was sent to the Vancouver conference as the representative of WLM in Edmonton. Members of the Rap Group contributed heavily to the fund raising to send delegates to both of these conferences.

These activities occurred after the splintering of the Parent Group. Since it had no effective organization at this time, the Rap Group took over the functions of organizing for WLM in Edmonton, gaining a more central position of influence in the process. The last two of the four local conferences held in Edmonton during the period of the study, took place at the Women's House, and were chaired by Rap Group leaders. At this time, it was the only faction in WLM which retained any credibility or confidence, both from its own members, and from other factions in the Parent Group. Although suspicious of each other, and unwilling to meet



as a group, the factions in the Parent Group seemed willing at least to meet on the "neutral territory" (for them) of the Women's House to discuss issues involving the totality of WLM.

The Rap Group emerged over the period of the study as the strongest and most stable faction of WLM in Edmonton. The rap sessions continued to expand in number. The Rap Group leaders had entered into a period of friendly relations with some of the YS women, who were approaching their tactics by opening a communal Women's House and by consciousness raising activities. They had gained the respect of many of the regulars in the Silent Majority, who, although they did not attend rap sessions, did visit informally at the Women's House. They had built up a regular membership of women, who, by their continued attendance, indicated satisfaction with "rapping" and the feminist ideology. By their example, A, B and C were demonstrating a communal life style without dependence on men. Over time, if their life style proved successful, it might serve as a model for other women to emulate.

#### Concluding Statement

The Rap Group leaders who endorsed the feminist ideology had managed successfully to integrate their ideology with their life style, indicating that the ideology was sufficiently consistent and developed internally that it could be satisfactorily applied to tactics — in this case, the life style of its proponents — as a solution to the problem situation which they perceived.

In this respect, they had surpassed the SWC, who had not yet integrated the elements of their ideology, nor integrated ideology with specific tactics. Although the feminist leaders of the Rap Group had so far proved unable to "convert" many other women to their life style, they





had succeeded in creating a situation in which other women would at least accept many of the elements of their ideology as valid. In terms of the goals which A and B had stated for the Rap Group, i.e. consciousness raising, they seemed to have come closer to realizing their most immediate goal, than either YS or SWC.

They had stated that, after consciousness raising, radical action would follow. Most of the women in the Rap Group had not yet been able and/or willing to follow up acceptance of the ideology with implementation in their own behavior. This might be: a) because the process of consciousness raising, especially in the form of transference of primary loyalty and dependence from men to other women, had not yet been completed, or b) because the women perceived that such change of allegiance was outside the boundaries of their alternative lines of action, and were content to use the rap sessions as emotional catharses.

However, the Rap Group did emerge from the period of the study in "healthiest" position of all the factions in WLM in the city. It had a solid core of interested members, and optimistic plans for future expansion in the fall of 1971 — an expansion which, if A and B are able to start a rap session with "woman identified women", will even more closely conform to the feminist priorities of A and B. At the end of the study, the Rap Group appeared to be the most likely of all the factions of WLM in Edmonton to survive and grow, and appeared to be moving tactically in line with its ideology.

The question of course arises — does the feminist ideology and the lines of action it is employing in order to obtain its goal really serve their intended function? That is, will the tactics of feminism bring about their stated "revolutionary" goal? It would appear from the evidence presented on the feminists, that their tactics are leading them,



not to a revolutionary goal, but to one of avoidance. The tendency to declare the problem solved by attempting to ignore the existence of men appears to avoid certain realistic issues.

One such issue, discussed above, is that women may perceive the alternatives of leaving men or of forcing change in the relationship as too costly to be an available line of action for them. If the majority of women perceive this as the case, the feminists could not hope to convert a significant number of them to their life style and ideology, and hence, could not hope to form a "power bloc" either within the system as it exists, or in the event of a Leftist revolution.

The antipathy of the feminists towards any interaction with males, and their interpretation of all male behavior as sexist, would appear to preclude the necessary minimum of communication and "political trust", for these women to engage with radical males in negotiations which could lead to the assumption of a power position by a feminist WLM bloc. It would seem that the very rigidity of their value system, in rejecting all male behavior as sexist, and in attempting to isolate themselves from contacts with such behavior, precludes interaction with men, thus closing all access to effective bargaining between the two actors. The feminists have seemingly committed themselves to an isolationist policy.

The feminists attempt to leave a line of action available by stating that not all communication is cut off irrevocably. They would interact with males who were "truly revolutionary". However, they are also convinced that no male fits that description, and the criteria for "truly revolutionary" behavior towards women is never defined. On the other hand, their definition of the system rests on the assumption that men form a class which keeps its privileged position through its sexist behavior; and that in this system, all men are, by definition, oppressors.



Alliances are therefore perceived as occurring at some ambiguous point in the future, at which time males would presumably renounce their "sex privileges" and be prepared to accept women as equals. However, the ideology also maintains that men will not give up their privileges voluntarily. Some feminist literature mentions that men must be considered the enemy for the time being -- the limits of that time contingent upon male renunciation of their privileges. The means by which males are to be divested of their privileged position remain unclarified.

The only tactics so far used by the feminists would appear to be the isolation of males from interaction, thus presumably forcing men to recognize their indispensability. When men realize that society cannot function without the co-operative participation of women, they will be ready to negotiate, and a "balance of power" can be created. If no more than a small minority of women perceive the tactic of isolating males as a line of action available to them, the efficiency of the tactic is questionable. The tactics of radical feminism would seem to leave them isolated from any effective means of forcing a change on the male dominated power structure.

Feminists believe that women should be completely independent of men. Even if it were possible for them to eradicate the psychological dependence of women on men, it would involve massive changes in the economic structure if all women were to become independent of men. The concentration of the feminists on building female relationships to replace female psychological dependence on men, and the tentative theoretical formulations for an independent "female culture" would also seem to have relatively limited application in reality. Hopes for the growth and maintenance of a major independent system existing in isolation from the dominant system already in existence have already been applied by other







isolationist minority groups, with only limited success.<sup>94</sup>

## VI. THE SILENT MAJORITY

The Silent Majority comprised those women belonging to the Parent Group who were neither YS nor SWC. It encompassed many of the regular members, and the sympathizers who rarely attended meetings. These women tended to be oriented to actively working on specific issues or projects, rather than to developing articulate ideological frameworks for WLM. They accepted the direction of the women in the other factions in terms of task activities. They participated in actions such as the picketing of the local city newspaper (August 25, 1970), the demonstration at city hall (February 9, 1971), and the abortion campaign demonstration and rally (February 13, 1971). They worked at money-making projects such as bake sales in order to send other, more "politically aware" women to conferences. They formed the bulk of attendance or "audience" at meetings, conferences, and educational programs, before whom the more politically articulate members performed. They performed the typical "supportive" activities which are considered acceptable for women in mixed male/female organizations, with little reward or recognition for their work. While they tended to give the responsibility for co-ordination of these projects and actions to the YS, SWC, and feminists, they were unwilling to accept any of the three alternative ideologies presented to them by the other three factions.

On the other hand, it was women from the Silent Majority who co-ordinated and worked in the committee structure of WLM: the committees for abortion referral, kindergarten and day care, and the newsletter.



### Stated Goal

While they recognize the existence of sexist behavior, they tend to give capitalism a larger role as the source of women's oppression. However, they tend to be "social democrats", hoping that the desired revolutionary changes can be brought about by changes in values, by community involvement in the processes of decision making, and through a series of legislative reforms.

They differ from SWC in that they perceive their goal as neither immediately attainable, nor attainable by violent means. Several women, who accepted a Marxist analysis of society, were not willing to grant that the social system was at the point where a revolution by violent means could occur. G once remarked, "I see no major changes coming in my lifetime." Others felt that an attempt to change the economic and political systems through violent means had no realistic chance of succeeding, and preferred instead to use the existing political parties to bring about legislative changes. The results of lobbying and voting power among the citizens would bring about a peaceful progression to socialism through change in the ruling political party and the legislation it would pass. The revolution would consist of the cumulative results of these changes. Some of the women, although socialists, felt unable to justify the prolongation of human suffering through ignoring reform issues in the hopes of radicalizing women to the long term goal of revolution, and so committed themselves to working for reforms.

On the other hand, they differed from the feminists in their attitudes and behavior towards men. Many were married, others were living with men. Of all the members, their life style tended to be the most conservative — stable marriages, single family residences, university education accompanied by ambitions for a professional future, children in



some instances. While they conceded the existence of sexist behavior, they tended to perceive that their own relationships were equalitarian, or at least workable. They expressed criticism of the feminist emphasis on excluding men from any participation in the women's movement and in their lives.

Although some had attended one or two rap sessions, or went to the Women's House to visit, none became regular Rap Group members. Some criticized the validity of consciousness raising as a tactic, feeling that it was "introspection" that had no referent beyond itself. As G put it, "You can only introspect so long, and then there's nothing new to discover." Although several expressed great admiration for the personal qualities of leadership that they perceived in A, and for the work that she was doing in organizing other women, they could not see consciousness raising as a tactic to apply to themselves. They tended to perceive themselves as not in need of a consciousness raising experience, for they felt that they: 1) understood the issues of WLM, and 2) were not in need of "personal therapy" — that they had no personal problems which could be solved in the context of "rapping".

#### Tactics: Committees for Reform

No specific ideology had been evolved by which they could simply define the problem situation and its sources, and propose solutions. Instead, because they were working on specific issues, with the hope of instituting specific reforms, the women tended to become acutely aware of the complexity of these issues. However, they had been unable to develop any tactics which would effectively bring about reforms in the areas in which they had become involved, and their success was severely limited.





The researcher worked with the abortion referral service from November 1970 until May 1971, and this committee will be used as an example to indicate some of the characteristics of the Silent Majority, whose ideology tended to be implied through their behavior, rather than to be verbally developed.

All of the women working on the referral service were Silent Majority women. The service operated out of the downtown office one evening of the week. Several of the women also made their home telephone numbers available through the campus newspaper and Welfare Information Service. An interview concerning the service in the local newspaper made these telephone numbers available to a larger population, but publicity for the service remained highest on the university campus for the duration of the study. The women working on the service had a list of doctors in the city who were reputed to be liberal concerning the performance of abortion. These names had been gleaned from a questionnaire which WLM had sent to all gynaecologists in the city (only eight responded), from the passage of gossip, and from one of the service volunteer workers who was a medical student. The service also obtained the addresses of several clinics in New York and California where abortions were performed. The purpose of the service was to refer women needing abortions to doctors who would perform them. They did not advise nor encourage women to obtain abortions, but provided information which could help a woman who had made up her own mind regarding her own need. They also did not provide information on the techniques of self-induced abortions, but did tell the women in some detail of the different techniques which were in medical use — in order to make the woman aware of what would happen to her. Since many of the women who contacted the service had not been using combination pills as their means of birth control, the members of the service



also advised them to begin use of that contraceptive as soon as possible after their abortion.

During the course of dealing with women wanting abortions, the members of the service came to realize that, despite the changes in legislation which made abortion legal "if the continuation of the pregnancy would be injurious to the health of the woman", that abortions were by no means easily obtainable. Many doctors interpreted the word "health" narrowly, to mean that the woman's life must be physically endangered e.g. a heart condition. Many refused to perform more than a minimum of abortions, claiming that abortions were "boring" and "routine", and did not utilize the technical skills which they had spent so much time perfecting in medical school. Some, who were personally more liberal in their interpretation of the law, did not wish to perform a large number, for fear of the sanctions of their fellow physicians.

Three of the five hospitals in the city had abortion boards, and of these three, two had extremely restrictive policies based on the narrow interpretation of the word "health". The third hospital was more liberal in its policy, and as a result, gynaecologists referring to that hospital were overwhelmed with women wanting abortions. The limited facilities at the hospital were soon strained, then hopelessly overloaded, as cases of elective surgery were postponed to admit abortion cases, which had semi-emergency status since there was a limited time within which they could be performed safely. The hospital limited abortion cases to those women resident in its referral district. Then, as the backlog of gynaecological and abortion cases continued to mount, refused to perform any abortions except in cases of extreme physical danger.

The women working at the referral service were aware that the major problem was not one of legislation, but of lack of facilities and personnel,



and lack of available birth control information and devices for women. It is legal for a clinic to be set up for the performance of abortions (and for birth control), provided that it is accredited by the provincial minister of health. There are doctors who would be willing to staff such a clinic, for principle and/or profit. It would even be possible to train paramedical personnel to perform abortions. Since staff would be volunteer, it would eliminate the problem of nurses who object to assisting at abortions when they are morally opposed to the procedure. The clinics could be set up in conjunction to hospitals so that immediate emergency treatment would be available should complications develop in the performance of an abortion, although a properly performed therapeutic abortion is less dangerous than pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>95</sup>

Despite their recognition of the means by which the problem situation could be resolved, the members of the service perceived that the only alternative available to them was to refer women to clinics in the United States if they were to obtain their abortions at all. This ensured that the women they referred successfully were those who could afford the trip to New York or California, and who could pay cash (minimum \$150) for their abortions.

The women in the referral service essentially perceived themselves as powerless to undertake any tactics which might make free abortion on demand a reality. They were effectively isolated from contact with other groups which had power to make changes. Doctors, on the whole, did not wish to discuss the situation with members of the service. Although several attempts were made to contact all the gynaecologists in the city to determine their stand on abortion, very few responded, and of those who did, only one was willing to share information regarding present policy and need. He blamed the provincial government for failing to provide the







funds for adequate abortion services. A meeting with an assistant to the minister of health provided information on the government's position — it blamed the attitudes of the medical profession for the impasse. Also, the minister of health had been elected in a Catholic riding, and had no intention of endangering his political career by publicly supporting the cause of easier abortions. The "buck was passed" between the provincial government and the medical profession, and the women were unable to assess which one was really at fault, or able to bring about change.

A group of upper middle class professional women (and professional men's wives) had formed an organization to do research and present a brief to the provincial government, proving the need for more adequate abortion facilities. This group, while it wanted access to the information which the referral service could provide, did not want to give access in return to the information they had gathered. Neither did they wish to be publicly associated with WLM, whose "notoriety" they felt would discredit their own organization.

The only other alternative that seemed available to them was one of publicity and propaganda. They could bring the issue before the public, in hopes that enough public support could be raised to affect the decision making process within the power structures of government and the medical profession. They were somewhat ambivalent about the tactic of demonstrations — partly because of the growing counterpressures from such anti-abortion groups as Alliance for Life and the Catholic church, and partly because demonstrations were advocated by YS primarily as a means of "politicizing" women for the revolution rather than as a tactic to apply pressure to the government to bring about change in the abortion laws. YS also tended to concentrate on demands for complete repeal of the laws concerning abortion, rather than for adequate facilities.



Thus, the complicated issue was presented in a simplified form to the public, in the form of the slogan "Free Abortion on Demand".

A demonstration had been carried out in the spring of 1970, in conjunction with the Abortion Caravan which travelled across Canada from Vancouver. It had been perceived as successful in terms of women working together co-operatively within the movement, but there was no clear perception of how much influence the demonstration had had, in bringing the issue to the attention of the public and in exerting a positive influence on the public.

In the abortion campaign of February 1971, only one woman from the Silent Majority (not a member of the abortion referral service) took part in the organization of the campaign. The women in the service felt that demonstrations were not an effective means to change the abortion situation, especially since YS concentrated on repeal of the laws rather than on the necessity for facilities. They also felt that the campaign organizers were not primarily concerned with the needs of women wanting abortions, but with "politicizing" women for the movement. This assumption on their part was not unfounded, since YS always discussed the issue of abortion in the context of using it as an "organizing tool" for drawing women into a radical analysis of society.

At the same time, the members of the service found themselves in a somewhat ambivalent position. They did not wish to make public their disapproval of the YS tactic, because they feared to give the impression to outsiders that WLM was divided from within. The reasons for the disagreement, they felt, would not be adequately reported by the media, and/or would be misinterpreted by the public.

The result of these factors was to make the women in the abortion referral service almost totally ineffective in terms of attaining their



goal of obtaining better abortion facilities in the city.

In the case of the kindergarten and day care committee, the women contacted other organizations in the city in order to gather information and set up a working relationship with them on the issue. They discovered that parents concerned with the issue had already set up organizations which seemed to be functioning adequately without the need of a WLM program to parallel those already in existence. The committee was dissolved. Most of the women on that committee were also on the newsletter committee, and kept up activities in that area until the dissolution of the Parent Group in April.

#### The Silent Majority Perspective: Implied Strategy for Women's Liberation

The handling of these issues by the Silent Majority women indicated several things about their perspective. Rather than totally rejecting the existing system, they still retained enough faith in it to explore the possibilities of change occurring from within. Although, like SWC, they believed in "grass roots" organization, or participatory democracy, they perceived that it could possibly exist under different conditions. SWC was convinced that participatory democracy could only exist in its fullest sense after the present structure had been destroyed and a new system developed. The Silent Majority women seemed to perceive instead that participatory democracy could be made a reality within the present system, by community involvement, and that the system could be changed from within. The SWC concentrated its energies in developing an ideology which would discredit the legitimacy of the present system. The Silent Majority still accepted the legitimacy of that system, since they were still willing to work within its framework. Since they still tended to accept the system, they had no need to develop another ideology, and used their energies in







carrying out projects which they thought had a chance of being implemented. If these changes equalized women's life chances with those of men, they would constitute a revolution in themselves. Such changes, they felt, could be brought about by a combination of legislation, and control by the public.

Unlike the Rap Group and SWC, who tended to hold themselves aloof from situations in which they were not in control, the Silent Majority attempted to participate with other segments of the community. They stepped outside of WLM to contact doctors, a member of the department of health, lawyers, another women's organization interested in abortion, parents' organizations concerned with kindergarten and day care. They tended to exhibit an interest in communicating with people outside the movement, including men, who indicated no intention of reciprocating the interest in WLM.

The alleged YS tactic of "infiltrating" other organizations, with its implications of elitist control of policy without the awareness of the general membership, appeared never to have occurred to the women of the Silent Majority as a tactic which they might themselves employ.

Their dealings with women wanting abortions tended not to include strenuous efforts to "politicize" the women. They tended to reject the concept of "bargaining" with the women, i.e. of providing information the woman needed only if the woman were willing to undertake a discussion of the way in which that particular situation oppressed her, and the reasons why it did. Information was given to the women with no return obligation on the part of the women. Although the women were asked to contact the referral service to provide feedback on their experiences, in order to provide more accurate information to future referrals, the request called for a purely voluntary response on the part of the woman. They retained



complete anonymity, so that if they did not choose to re-establish contact with the service, the service could not reach them. Few women made the response, a factor which the members of the service found very discouraging. It also had a serious limiting effect on the amount of accurate information available to the service over time. For example, the service could refer a woman to a doctor whom they thought would perform an abortion, only to find, several referrals later, that the doctor was now refusing to perform abortions at all. However, the volunteers felt that their information was the rightful property of any woman who asked for it. To refuse access to that information unless the woman provided something in return was regarded as applying coercion, and violating the basic right of the woman to information which she needed. For these reasons, the service operated at much less than full efficiency.

The perspectives of the Silent Majority women led to their being labelled by the SWC as possessing a "low level of consciousness". Although the attitude of the SWC towards the Silent Majority has been documented earlier, a final example might be given. In a verbal exchange between an SWC woman and a Silent Majority woman, the latter was labelled as a "liberal". The Silent Majority woman, G, had been a "red diaper baby" born of socialist parents, had been deeply involved in the anti war movement, was presently involved in community work through her job, and exhibited a more thorough understanding of Marx than anyone else in WLM in the city.

Although the stated goal of the Silent Majority women is revolutionary, their perception of the process constituting revolution, and of the tactics by which a revolution might be brought about, differ from the other factions in WLM. Although they maintain that WLM strategy must involve organizing or "proselytizing" other women, they appear to be more



willing than the other factions to step outside the somewhat restrictive boundaries of WLM and meet other segments of the community on terms other than their own. They perceive the potential membership base of WLM as non-restrictive. They tend not to perceive women as divided into constituencies, and in this respect they resemble the Feminists. However, they are somewhat doubtful as to the appropriate reaction to the issue of lesbianism, tending to perceive it in its personal aspect rather than politically.

#### Perception of the Role of the Silent Majority

The issue of class is particularly pertinent to them, because they perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, as middle class. They perceive that the SWC is contemptuous of them because they are middle class, and react in some bewilderment to the directive to "declass" themselves. They are still not willing to renounce the image of themselves as intrinsically worthwhile beings as they exist, even if they are middle class. As one woman put it, "I can't help being born what I am."

Stemming from their self perception of their middle classness, they also tend to think of themselves as occupying a somewhat privileged position; as being less personally oppressed than most other women. This perception is enhanced by their belief that they have fairly equalitarian marital relationships, and by the belief that they understand the sources of women's oppression. Because of their personal advantages, they feel that they would be able to "work for" other, more oppressed women. Their middle classness could even be perceived as an advantage, because it permits them the resources of education and time which will allow them to do for other women what they are incapable of doing for themselves.







They would be quite willing to form coalitions with other groups which are interested in the same issues as they. However, these groups are more moderate than the image of WLM, and are hesitant to align themselves with WLM for fear that the image of WLM will discredit their own attempts to win reforms. The Silent Majority women, on the other hand, do not like to join other organizations without declaring their affiliation with WLM, since it would appear to them as a hypocritical denial of a vital part of their belief system. Since the only other organizations interested in the issues of concern to them tend to desire to preserve a "respectable", moderate image, they are left somewhat isolated from other sources with which they would be willing to work, and which do have more access than they to the sources of political power within the system. The only major support which WLM has is the Waffle caucus of the NDP party, which openly declares its support of WLM.

#### Concluding Statement

The Silent Majority is interested in the implementation of specific reforms in areas such as abortion, day care, and equal work opportunity for women. They do not tend to question the positive value of such issues. In this, they differ markedly from SWC, which tends to perceive that all these "reforms" could be implemented within capitalism without qualitatively benefiting women. They feel instead, that these reforms can only serve to benefit women, by "revolutionizing" women's life chances, and permitting them to achieve equality with men. Since they assume that reforms are the essential building blocks to the creation of women's liberation, they do not question their validity, but accept the necessity of working towards their realization as the primary function of WLM. However, they have not managed to develop tactics which would achieve



their goal. Several reasons could be suggested for this failure, one of which might be that their assumptions about the nature of the system are faulty. Another could be that they are not aware of the channels which could be used to effect change, nor how to make use of those channels.

Although they state their goal as revolutionary, it would appear from their behavior and the ideology indicated from their tactics, that their orientation is more reformist than revolutionary, at least in terms of the framework of the thesis. They are willing to work through the channels of the system, indicating a continued faith in the legitimacy of that system, and a belief that it can be made responsive to the articulated needs of the people.

In August of 1971, the researcher had the opportunity to talk to several of the Silent Majority women. Plans were afoot to form a new WLM group in the fall, independent of both socialists and feminists. The informants stated that the group would be interested in "bread and butter issues", and likened its probable position to that of N.O.W. Founded by Betty Friedan, N.O.W. has been termed the N.A.A.C.P. of women's liberation, and is generally regarded as reformist by the other branches of the movement, although Friedan regards it as revolutionary.<sup>96</sup>

## VII. SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the major theme of ideology as it was expressed within the WLM organization in Edmonton, as an indicator of the type of response which was being made by these women to their position in society. The members of WLM have defined the problem situation as the oppression of women. The solution is presented in terms of the goal of self-determination by and for women. Two sources have been identified



as the cause of women's oppression: capitalism and men. There have developed four variations in ideology, represented by four factions within WLM, based on the differences in perception of the source of women's oppression, and further differences in perception of the alternatives available for attaining the goal of self-determination.

The ideology of the Young Socialists indicated a revolutionary response to women's position, both in terms of defining the source of women's oppression as capitalism, and in terms of their proposed solution—a socialist revolution. Their ideology appeared to be internally consistent and well integrated with their behavior. The ideology of the Socialist Women's Caucus also indicated a revolutionary response, both in identifying capitalism as the source of women's oppression, and in the advocacy of its overthrow in a socialist revolution. However, their ideology was neither internally consistent in its elements, nor well integrated with their behavior, and consequently the SWC seemed unable to work effectively towards any goal. The members of the Rap Group who could be termed feminists held an ideology which was internally consistent, and well integrated with the behavior of the women who had adopted it. They defined men as the source of women's oppression, and responded by isolating themselves from interaction with men. Although their stated goal was revolutionary, their ideology and behavior both suggested the response of avoidance. The Silent Majority did not have an articulated ideology, but the behavior of the women in this faction indicated a reformist response, although they stated that they believed in a revolutionary goal, many being advocates of socialism.





Footnotes: Chapter V

1. Herbert Blumer, "Social Movements", Studies in Social Movements: A Social Psychological Perspective, ed. Barry McLaughlin (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 8-29.
2. Arnold M. Rose, "A Systematic Summary of Symbolic Interaction Theory", Human Behavior and Social Processes: An Interactionist Approach, ed. Arnold M. Rose (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962), pp. 3-19.
3. Royal Commission Report, op.cit., pp. 333-364.
4. W.L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969).
5. See discussion of YS LSA pp. 167-185, and of the Socialist Women's Caucus pp. 186-216.
6. From a pamphlet, "Introducing the Young Socialists", publisher and date unstated.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women, date unknown.
10. From the position paper by Toronto YS women presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970.
11. Ibid. This portion of the paper is the condensation of the brief presented by YS/LSA to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada.
12. Ibid.
13. From a position paper by Vancouver Women's Alliance presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970.
14. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women, date unknown.
15. From the position paper by Toronto YS women presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970.
16. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women, date unknown.
17. From the position paper by Toronto YS women presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970.
18. Ibid.



19. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women, date unknown.
20. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women at a local conference, December 5, 1970.
21. From the position paper by Toronto YS women presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970. Underlining is that of the researcher.
22. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women, date unknown.
23. From the position paper by Toronto YS women presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970.
24. Ibid.
25. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women at a local conference, December 5, 1970.
26. Ibid. The originally planned date of February 14 was subsequently changed to February 13.
27. See discussion of the Silent Majority, pp. 251-257.
28. Edmonton WLM was involved in eight conferences during the period of the study. Five were local one day conferences, involving only the members of Edmonton WLM, and took place in the city. The dates for these conferences were: October 4, 1970; November 1, 1970; December 9, 1970; February 21, 1971; and April 4, 1971.

Besides these local conferences, three others of wider interest were held. On November 20-22, 1970 the first Canadian national WLM conference was held in Saskatoon. On February 6-7, 1971 a planning conference was held in Portland, Oregon with delegates from Canada and the United States, to organize the first international WLM conference. This was held in Vancouver on April 1-6, 1971, and took in delegates from western Canada and the United States. A parallel conference of the same magnitude took place in Toronto the following week, for WLM organizations on the eastern half of the continent.
29. From an unpublished position paper presented to Edmonton WLM by YS women at a local conference, December 9, 1970.
30. From a position paper by Vancouver Women's Caucus, presented at the Saskatoon Conference November 20-22, 1970, entitled "Women's Caucus and the YS/LSA: A Majority View".
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.



35. Ibid.
36. See discussion of New Left ideology, Chapter IV, pp. 127-130.
37. See discussion of sexism, pp. 166-167.
38. Charlotte Bonny Cohen, "Experiment in Freedom: Women of China", Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 385-417.
39. Florence Howe, "Liberated Chinese Primers", Women: A Journal of Liberation, vol. 2, no. 1 (Fall 1970), pp. 33-34.
40. Lisa Hobbs, "Has Women's Lib. Made It to China?", Chatelaine vol. 44, no. 12 (December 1971), p. 63.
41. Ché Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1969), pp. 98-100.
42. Melody Killian, "Discussion Paper — Towards a Strategy", mimeographed position paper, p. 5.
43. Pierre Berton, The Smug Minority (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).
44. Melody Killian, op.cit., p. 5.
45. Ibid., p. 5.
46. Ellen Willis, "Women and the Left", originally printed in The Guardian "Liberation Forum" (February 15, 1968). Reprinted in Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation — Major Writings of the Radical Feminists, eds. Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: Chelsea, 1970), pp. 55-56.
47. "A Reply", written by members of women's liberation in Ontario in response to Ellen Willis, "Women and the Left", printed by the Canadian Union of Students, 246 Queens Street, Ottawa 4, date unknown.
48. Melody Killian, op.cit., p. 5.
49. Ibid., p. 6.
50. Ibid., p. 6.
51. Ibid., p. 6.
52. "A Reply", op.cit., p. 4.
53. Melody Killian, op.cit., p. 6.
54. Ibid., p. 7.
55. Ibid., p. 7.





56. Ibid., p. 7.
57. Ibid., p. 8.
58. See discussion of women in the economy, Chapter II, pp. 68-79.
59. Melody Killian, op.cit., p. 7.
60. Florika and Gilda, "The Politics of Day Care", Women: A Journal of Liberation, vols. 1 & 2 (Winter 1970), p. 30.
61. Ibid., p. 30.
62. Ibid., p. 31.
63. Ibid., p. 32.
64. Ibid., p. 32.
65. The Alberta Nurses' Association, Canadian Medical Association, Alberta Medical Association, the United Church of Canada, and the majority statement of the Royal Commission Report have all endorsed this position.
66. See discussion of women in the economy, Chapter II, pp. 68-79.
67. Ibid.
68. "A Reply", op.cit., p. 3.
69. Ibid., p. 3.
70. Marlene Dixon, "A Program for National Agitation for the Women's Liberation Front in Colleges and Universities", working draft — mimeographed paper, p. 1.
71. Ibid., p. 6.
72. Jean Rands, "The Problem of Priorities", Vancouver Women's Caucus working paper, mimeographed paper, May 1969, p. 3.
73. One of the most interesting factors noted about most of the women in WLM was their apparent inability to take the role of others.
74. The SWC showed some inconsistency in their stand on radical males, at times indicating acceptance of coalitions, and at times rejecting radical men as chauvinists and obsessed with power.
75. See the discussion of the leadership of the Rap Group, pp. 236-238; also Chapter IV, pp. 149-150.
76. Ellen Willis, op.cit., p. 56.
77. Ibid., p. 56.



78. Shulamith Firestone, "Love", S. Firestone and A. Koedt, op.cit., pp. 16-27.  
cf. Ron E. Roberts, The New Communes: Coming Together in America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 86-90.
79. Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political", S. Firestone and A. Koedt, op.cit., pp. 76-78.
80. J.E. Simpson and J.M. Yinger, Racial and Cultural Minorities, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 164-170.
81. Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, The Mark of Oppression (New York: Meridian Books, 1962).
82. Ellen Willis, op.cit., p. 55.
83. "Recommendations to the R.U. Conference", mimeographed paper, date unknown, p. 4.
84. Ellen Willis, op.cit., p. 56.
85. See discussion of New Left ideology, Chapter IV, p. 129, note #14.
86. See discussion of lesbianism, p. 235.
87. Judith Brown, "Toward a Female Liberation Movement, Part II", (Boston: New England Free Press, 1968), p. 28.
88. Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman", Ain't I a Woman? vol. 1, no. 12 (February 19, 1971), p. 2.
89. March Hoffman et.al., "The Woman Identified Woman", Women: A Journal of Liberation, vol. 1, no. 4 (Summer 1970), p. 39.
90. Ibid., p. 39.
91. Ibid., p. 39.
92. See discussion of YS women, pp. 184-185.
93. Voice of Women and Women's Strike for Peace were originally in contact with the Vietnamese women. They arranged two conferences, one in Vancouver and one in Toronto. The conferences were held in Canada because of the fear that the Vietnamese women would not be able to get permits to enter the United States. The Vietnamese women expressed a desire to meet women from WLM, and North American Third World women, so VOW and WSP invited these two groups to join the conferences. The latter two groups were given the task of planning the structure of the conferences. Each lasted for six days; two of which were devoted to plenary sessions with the Vietnamese women, two for Third World workshops, and two for separate conferences for VOW - WSP. A delegatory system was imposed on members of WLM, but not on VOW - WSP nor the Third World women. Also, only 10% of the delegates could come from Canada.



94. Robert Houriet, Getting Back Together (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghehan, 1971).

Houriet documents the failure of many rural communal experiments to maintain themselves in isolation from the larger economy.

An earlier example was the unsuccessful attempt by the community of Black Muslims to set up an economic system independent of the dominant white system.

95. Birth Control Handbook, 3rd ed., published by McGill Students' Society, 3480 McTavish Street, Montreal 112, Quebec, 1970.

cf. Dr. M. Mahood, "The Right to Abortion", Interface (February, 1971) vol. 3, no. 3, p. 21.

96. Betty Friedan, "Our Revolution Is Unique", Voices of the New Feminism, ed. Mary Lou Thompson (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 31-43.





## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the material presented in the thesis, women might be considered as a subordinate group interacting in a role relationship with a dominant group; a relationship which is characterized by a power differential between the two groups. If women, or a segment of the female population, refuse to accept the legitimacy of the role relationship, they must develop a preferred alternative as a goal. The development of an alternative may be embodied in the growth of a social movement.

#### I. REVIEW OF THE DATA

It would appear that the preconditions for the growth of a movement such as women's liberation exist when women are exposed to strong role conflicts. Several contradictions exist in the role expectations for women in this society today.

1. Women's educational level is rising while their available job opportunities are not increasing at a proportionate rate.
2. Medically, the conditions exist whereby women could control their own reproductive systems, but the law and societal values do not permit this control.
3. There is less need for the performance of domestic "household management" chores on a full-time basis, but there are no constructive channels for the newly available leisure.
4. Women's traditional role has always centered around the family, but the real family situation today is one of "technological underemployment"



for the greater part of the woman's increasing life span.

5. There has been a breakdown in the double standard of sexual behavior, but women are sexually exploited under the name of "the new morality".

The women predisposed to join a movement such as women's liberation, in the group studied, and as noted in the literature, tend to:

1) be in a position where they will be highly likely to be exposed to these role conflicts, 2) perceive themselves as relatively deprived of certain privileges and "rights", 3) possess some characteristics which give them relative immunity from effective penalization for noncompliance with the existing expectations of the sex role relationship.

In the group studied, the women were predominantly young (average age 25 years), middle class, and university educated. Women with these characteristics are highly likely to be exposed to the role conflicts in existence in society. Young, middle class women undergo an educational experience in which they are exposed to role expectations and values that are inconsistent with the opportunities that are available to them. They may be disposed to develop levels of aspiration which cannot be realized within the existing system of sex role relationships. One response to such an inconsistency is to reject the legitimacy of the role system which retards the realization of their aspirations.

The women in the group studied also tended to be childless, to be free of financial dependence on men, and to have adopted some of the elements of the countercultural life style and the political ideology of the New Left. Most were not bound by the restrictions of caring for husbands and children, and were not limited by belief in the conventional norms regarding the proper life style for middle class women. From their political experience, they had developed the tendency to question many of the expectations of the social system as a whole. These factors gave



them a degree of freedom, not available to other women, to reject the legitimacy of existing role expectations, and to explore alternative normative systems. Because they did not accept the existing role expectations as legitimate, the penalties for noncompliance with those expectations lost much of their effectiveness. The "political" orientation of many of the women also contributed to the perspective that a social movement was the most effective vehicle for the correction of a problem situation.

If an actor refuses to grant the legitimacy of the existing role relationship, the task becomes one of defining the situation which is considered problematic, defining its sources or causes, and developing tactics by which the problem situation may be solved. The tactics used are determined by the lines of action which the actor perceives as available to him.

These women have defined the problem situation as one of institutionalized inequality. Women occupy a subordinate position in the social system, and because of their relative powerlessness, they are systematically exploited — psychologically, economically, and sexually. This situation is defined as unacceptable. The alternative goal is defined as self-determination.

The identification of the source of women's oppression, and the development of a strategy or tactics for its solution, are embodied in the form of an ideology. This ideology is an indicator of the type of response which is being made by these women to their position in society. The formation of ideology which can be successfully integrated with behavior, is in the process of evolving within the women's movement. Although it is agreed within the movement that women are oppressed, there is no single ideology by which the women in the movement define the source







of that oppression, nor its solutions. In developing their ideologies, the women have borrowed heavily from the existing "political" ideology of the New Left.

In the group studied, there appeared to be four variations in ideology, reflecting differing definitions of the sources of the problem situation, and indicating different responses to the position of women, represented by four conflicting factions of women within the umbrella term "women's liberation". The factions seemed to conform to Coser's discussion on conflicts within a movement.<sup>1</sup> The difference in ideological analysis lay primarily along one line of cleavage — the definition of the source of women's oppression — an issue which was also central to determining the tactics and resultant direction which the movement would take. Although all of the factions defined their goal as revolutionary, the varying definitions of the source of women's oppression led to the acceptance of tactics which did not, in all cases, lead to the stated goal. Also, the different ideological trends showed different degrees of development, and presented varying degrees of integration with behavior, which contributed to the differences observed in the viability of the factions.

The ideology of the Young Socialists indicated a revolutionary response to women's position, both in terms of defining the source of women's oppression as capitalism, and in the tactics advocated and used in attempts to solve the problem situation through the implementation of a socialist revolution. Their ideology was internally consistent and well integrated with their behavior, and throughout the period of the study they acted as a viable, cohesive unit. The referent for their response appeared to lie outside the boundaries of WLM, however, and within a political organization to which they gave their primary loyalty. Women and women's liberation were essentially viewed as a constituency to be



"radicalized". By the control of this and other constituencies, the revolutionary goal of the Trotskyists would allegedly be brought closer to fruition. The ideology of YS may be termed Trotskyist, rather than specifically women's liberationist. YS occupied a somewhat marginal position in WLM, because the other members perceived that YS women did not make WLM their primary referent, but were attempting to direct the movement for the ends of an outside organization.

The ideology of the Socialist Women's Caucus also indicated a revolutionary response to women's position, in its identification of capitalism as the source of women's oppression, and the advocacy of its overthrow in a socialist revolution. However, their ideology was neither internally consistent, nor well integrated with their behavior. Without the further evolution of their ideology to include such conditions, the group seemed to be unable to work effectively towards the goal that it has set for itself.

The third discernible ideological branch was that of the feminists. This ideology was both internally consistent, and well integrated with the behavior of the women who had adopted it. The feminists appeared to be the faction within WLM which emerged as the most likely to continue to develop and expand. However, the goal of the feminists was stated as revolutionary; whereas the elements of the ideology, in defining men as the source of women's oppression, and the behavior arising from that ideology in the form of isolating the adherents from interaction with men, would appear to more closely resemble the response of avoidance.

The Silent Majority did not have an ideology that was verbally articulated as were the ideologies of the other factions. Their behavior was the major indicator available to show their position. This response proved to be closer to that of N.O.W., than that of the other WLM factions.





Their response appeared to be reformist rather than revolutionary, since they tended to rely on existing institutional channels to bring about meaningful change. This belief was rejected by the other three factions, who perceived that, since these institutions were not responsive to their needs, change could only be effected through pressure from outside the system.

The societal context is one of the situational variables which affects the response of movement members. Their behavior is mediated both by the actual constraints of the societal context, and by their perception of it. To the extent that their perception of the social system is an accurate reflection of the actual situation, their tactics are more likely to be effective.

Although WLM appeared so far to have been unsuccessful in its attempts to define and implement effective alternatives to the present sex role relationship, it must be remembered that their perceptions were mediated by the system itself. The women in the movement were constrained by the situation in which they exist. For example, in the case of the Socialist Women's Caucus, their attempts to develop effective communistic alternatives were hampered by their continuing partial adherence to existing individualistic societal values, which were being constantly reinforced from outside the movement. In the case of the feminists, they were concentrating on developing a new model of role behavior based on direct opposition to the one in existence. They rejected all aspects of what they termed "male culture" on the basis that it is pathological, and uncritically endorsed all "feminine" characteristics, even those which may be largely mythical stereotypes, or which may not contribute to a more "humanizing" system of role relationships.

The perception within the movement that the existing system is non-responsive to their needs and demands, has also led to the belief that





moderate tactics will not serve their purpose effectively. They have instead endorsed tactics which are perceived as non-legitimate from the perspective of the dominant group, for example, the advocacy of socialism, of "isolating" men, or of female homosexuality. In so doing, they are risking the alienation and antagonism not only of the dominant group, but also of potential female constituents. However, it should be pointed out that societal reaction to WLM was not a major area of research in the study. Because of the position of the researcher within the organization, it was difficult to assess societal reaction to the movement, and its effect on the tactics of the membership. It might also be noted that there appeared to be little interest within the group in assessing societal reactions to the analyses and actions of the women's liberation movement. When infrequent assessments were made, they were apt to be inaccurate. For example, most members in the group seemed to believe that the abortion issue had been won. Subsequently, this has proved not to be the case, as evidenced by the appointment of a legal guardian for all fetuses between the ages of 4 and 24 weeks in New York.<sup>2</sup> The area of societal reaction to WLM can best be discussed in the section regarding suggestions for future research on the relationship between WLM and the larger social system, see pages 291-298.

It is possible to see, however, that the alternatives which the members of the movement perceive as available to them, and those which they actually utilize, are mediated by the societal context in which they themselves exist. In order to find the most effective alternatives, the movement must develop an analysis in which perception of the social system more accurately reflects the real situation. In this context, the existence of factionalism could be seen to have positive as well as negative functions. Factionalization may weaken a movement, but may also



represent a continuing search for more accurate definitions of the situation, and hence for the development of more effective tactics. Splintering of the movement into factions at this point may indicate continuing efforts in this direction.

## II. A NEW PERSPECTIVE

A major finding which developed out of the analysis of the data, was the existence of a degree of integration between ideology and behavior, as a distinct variable. This variable appears to have implications both for the clarification and revision of the theoretical framework which was developed at the outset of the thesis and used as a guide in data collection, as well as for further empirical research. The discussion which follows is an attempt to outline, with examples, some of the factors which may exert an influence on the degree of congruence between ideology and behavior. The behavior of an actor in a particular situation would seem to be mediated by the unity and consistency of his ideology, and by the constraints of the external situation in which interaction occurs. Also, the discussion notes that further empirical investigations would require operational measurements for assessing the degree of integration between ideology and behavior within a social movement, as it is affected by these factors.

1. The ideology itself delimits or constrains the potential lines of action that the members of a social movement perceive as available in their attempts to obtain their goal of a new role relationship. The ideology provides a definition of the situation for its adherents. By defining the problem and its sources in a particular way, the ideology opens some potential lines of action, closes others, and commits the movement to still other lines of action. If the ideology is internally



inconsistent, then behavior may not be integrated with the ideology, because the potential lines of action are incompatible. The lack of integration, and resulting attempts to reduce ideological inconsistencies would help to explain the behavior of the group.

2. The ideological definition of the situation may not be consistent with the real situation. If the adherents' perception of the situation, as expressed through the movement's ideology, is inaccurate, the attempts of the movement to cope with the real situation confronting it will be impaired. The movement may be constrained to use tactics which are inconsistent with the lines of action specified by the ideology.

3. The real situation may not permit the movement to engage in behavior that would be consistent with its ideology, even though the ideology itself is consistent with the situation that actually exists. It is difficult, for example, for a subordinate group to occupy statuses equivalent to those of the dominant group, if the dominant group refuses to recognize the claims of the subordinate group, and if the latter group, or a movement which claims to represent it, does not possess the lines of action to force the former group to alter its position. The movement members may, in this case, engage in symbolic behavior that would make it appear to them that they were behaving consistently with their ideology, and moving towards their stated goal.

4. Finally, the movement may adhere to two belief systems or goals, reflected in two distinct ideologies which are each internally consistent, but which are appropriate to two separate spheres of action, which may conflict with each other. The movement may resolve the conflict by adhering to one goal and the lines of action appropriate to it, by becoming immobilized, or by attempting to integrate the conflicting elements so that they achieve consistency.







Some examples may be provided from the data in support of these statements. In one example, the ideology of the Young Socialists was internally consistent in its elements, while that of the Socialist Women's Caucus was not. YS perceived women and women's liberation as a constituency to organize for a larger goal, that of a socialist revolution. The Socialist Women's Caucus perceived women to be "oppressed as women and workers". They seemed unable to resolve the conflict between working towards socialism as their paramount goal, and their conviction that women face unique oppression as a sex.

The behavior of the Young Socialists also appeared to be congruent with their ideology, while that of the Socialist Women's Caucus was not. One of the situational variables affecting the behavior of both factions was that of reference groups. The YS women had a very strong reference group in the presence of their national political organization. Their behavior and attitudes both inside and outside WLM were heavily influenced, not only by the ideology of YS, but by their interaction with the other members of their organization in Edmonton, and by the discipline of the party as a whole. Their whole life style was effectively directed by the organization to which they gave their primary loyalty. By contrast, although the SWC subscribed to a socialist ideology, its members had no strong reference group support or pressure to influence them to act in conformity with this ideology. That is, they had no socialist role model to emulate and which would encourage the "socialist" behavior theoretically stated in their ideology. On the other hand, there were counterpressures directing them towards non-compliance with the socialist elements of their ideology, such as a life style still based on individualistic values.



A further example, from another social movement, but very pertinent in the context of the discussion, is provided in Myerhoff's article "The Revolution as a Trip: Symbol and Paradox".<sup>3</sup> She analyses a "strike" staged by radical students at a large American university in May 1970. The students were followers of the "Yippie" philosophy exemplified by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. They had two opposing and equally valued goals.

They wished to alter power arrangements and social structures — this was the political aspect of their commitment to change. But at the same time they wished to introduce a very specific, all-embracing life style — and this can be called the cultural dimension of the revolution.<sup>4</sup>

These goals, the first instrumental, the second expressive, were conflicting in that they called for different tactics for their realization.

The accomplishment of their political goals necessitates self-sacrifice, determination, delayed gratification, and rational, calculating, efficient organization. Yet these very qualities and actions are antithetical to the way life is to be lived in their view — spontaneously, openly, for the present, for its own sake, in unanalysed, uncategorized, urgent subjectivity.<sup>5</sup>

A further paradox involved the situational variables surrounding the "strike". In response to the Cambodian invasion, the student slayings at Kent State and Jackson State Colleges, and the concern over these issues, the administration of the university cancelled classes for several days, and opened the campus for discussion of the issues. Thus, the radical students were effectively prevented from striking in protest against the university administration. The "strike", under these circumstances, became a protest action by the students against national domestic and international policies, but could not, because of the tactics of the administration, be turned into direct confrontation with the latter body.

The response of the radical student leaders was to use the occasion for a celebration of the countercultural life style. Myerhoff considered





this response to be inevitable, considering the external circumstances in which the students were acting, and considering the different degrees of development of the ideologies concerning their two goals. The administration had effectively outmanoeuvred them at the outset, and they had too little student backing and political experience to counteract the administration's tactics. At the same time, the student leaders had developed a much more specific program for implementing a countercultural life style, than for implementing political change, and they could expect more support from the students in such activities.

The students resolved this problem by using the strike to stress the cultural dimension of their revolution, dramatizing it, and declaring their identity as a generation with contracultural values as insistently and intensely as they could. Officially, the revolution was as political as it had ever been. Actually, it was the cultural program which was enacted consistently, but the defeat and abandonment of the political program was never acknowledged. The political symbols of the strike were employed consistently and always included references to what they regarded as egregious domestic and foreign policy and practice by government.<sup>6</sup>

Myerhoff saw their response as expressed primarily through symbols and rituals, for example, the use of guerrilla theatre instead of direct confrontation, the "cooling off" of internal disputes with the use of shared rituals of drugs and music, and "scenarios" between administration and student leaders in which the outcome was a foregone conclusion of stalemate.

By using these shared rituals and symbols, those involved were able to avoid the direct confrontation of the conflict inherent in their ideology. The same rituals and symbols served them in coping with the other paradox with which they lived during this time, that the strike was not their own doing at all.<sup>7</sup>

Selective interpretation of reality and unification of paradox are the functions of symbol and ritual which are of particular concern here....One of these paradoxes is the result of a contradiction within (the students') ideology, and the other results from a conflict between the ideology and the external circumstances in which their actions occurred.





In both cases, their rituals and symbols served well in providing them with a sense of the coherence and integrity of their ideology and allowing them to experience congruence between their beliefs and actions.<sup>8</sup>

The bases for assessing the degree of integration between behavior and ideology cannot be stated operationally in this thesis. The original intent of the thesis was not to study the problem of measuring degree of integration between behavior and ideology in a social movement, but to study ideology as an indicator of response to subordinate status in a particular case, that of the women's liberation movement. That behavior and ideology did differ in some instances in the group studied, was a finding which emerged from the data. While it is possible to use this finding to further refine the original theoretical schema, the framework of the study did not permit a further analysis of the degree of integration between the two variables in operational terms. The data was gathered with the intent of answering one question, and could not be "stretched" to apply to another question. Therefore, operational measurements of the degree of integration between attitudes and behavior in social movements is a task for further research, and cannot be undertaken within the scope of this thesis. Measurements must be developed for the variables of ideology, behavior, and the degree of integration between ideology and behavior within a social movement.

### III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings given above must be limited to the group studied by the researcher, due to the nature of the methodology of the study. However, 1) a reading of the available literature of the movement from both Canada and the United States, 2) participant observation at the first national Canadian WLM conference, held in Saskatoon November 20-22, 1970,



and 3) material gathered from informants who attended the combined Canadian and American WLM conference, in Vancouver in April 1971, all indicated that the findings were not isolated to the case of the group which the researcher had the opportunity to study, but were common to the movement as a whole.

Future research could be done on several aspects of the movement. The methodology might profitably include a content analysis of the literature available from the movement, and observation on a larger scale of the WLM organizations across Canada. The researcher maintains that the more conventional instruments of sociological research, the formal interview and questionnaire, could not be used with WLM groups, simply because they would be rejected by the membership. However, informal interviewing through respondents could be undertaken, if the researcher had specific hypotheses in mind that she wanted to test, by spending several days in each of the WLM groups chosen as a sample, in discussion with the members and observing their behavior.

Specific problem areas appear to be common to the movement as a whole, and many of them have been mentioned in WLM literature, revealing an awareness of their existence by WLM members. Some are primarily internal, others external.

#### Problems Internal to Women's Liberation

Ideology. The bulk of the data in this thesis indicates that the formation of ideology is an important area of activity within the movement. Socialism and feminism appear to be the two major ideological branches to have been developed so far. Socialism seems to be the dominant ideology in Canada, but in the United States, feminism and socialism appear to be roughly equivalent in influence. It remains to be seen



whether these ideologies have evolved to their fullest potential, and whether new ideologies will emerge.

A part of the formation of ideology has been concerned with what could be called the development of a "female culture". Like the black cultural nationalists, women in the movement are becoming increasingly interested in researching the history of womankind (in "writing women back into history") and in developing a "mythology" in which women are portrayed as possessing qualities equal or superior to those of men.<sup>9</sup> This desire to give women a self image which is divorced from their subordinate group position might be illustrated in the following poem, taken from the back cover of Women: A Journal of Liberation (Spring 1970).

Our history has been  
stolen from us.  
Our heroes died in  
childbirth, from  
peritonitis  
overwork  
oppression  
from bottled-up rage.  
Our geniuses were  
never taught to  
read or write.  
We must invent a  
past adequate  
to our ambitions.  
We must create a  
future adequate  
to our needs.<sup>10</sup>

Factionalism. Factionalism is one of the major problems within the movement. This is apparent not only from the observation of the WLM organization in the city. Ideological disputes are also indicated in the literature of the movement, even manifesting themselves in occurrences such as the splitting of the staff of a WLM newspaper, Off Our Backs,<sup>11</sup> which is distributed in Canada and the United States, into feminists and socialists. The feminists eventually left the staff of the





newspaper, when it became apparent that the two factions could not create a publication that satisfied them both.

At the Saskatoon conference, three factions emerged: revolutionary socialists, Young Socialists, and non-socialist women. At the Vancouver conference, a large number of Radicalesbians from the United States attended (ignoring the delegatory system), in addition to YS and socialist women. Proceedings in both conferences were dominated by disputes among these factions. In Canada, splits have occurred between YS and other socialist women in Vancouver and Saskatoon.

It might be questioned to what degree are such disputes functional and dysfunctional for the movement. They may weaken the movement; or they may lead to the further evolution of an ideology which is more synthetic than those developed to the present, or to the emergence of one of the ideologies as the sole theoretical basis of WLM.

Elitism. Elitism in the movement has several reference points, and is another major factor which divides WLM from within.

1. Ideological Elitism. The intolerance of each faction for the beliefs of each other and of those outside the movement, is one of the most striking features the researcher encountered. A question to explore would be the functions of such intolerance and of the absolute certainty of the correctness each faction has of its own ideology.

From the evidence available to the researcher, ideological elitism has been indicated most strongly by revolutionary socialist women, in Canada. In the United States, the criticism has been more mutual. Feminists, however, often seem to be forced into a defensive position, defending the validity of their position against the criticisms of the socialists.



At the Saskatoon conference, one of the most influential women in the movement in Canada attacked the feminists ("those damned feminists") as "middle class women engrossed in group therapy and the quality of their orgasms", while ignoring the plight of the poor who are the only really oppressed people.

At the same conference, even more openly contemptuous attitudes were displayed towards women who were not declared revolutionary socialists. For example, on one day of the conference, two sessions were scheduled; a session for socialist women in the morning, and a plenary session on strategy in the afternoon. The socialist session was turned into a session to discuss strategy for the movement as a whole — by vote of the socialist women, without notification of the non-socialist members.

A second example from the conference concerned the statement of a declared revolutionary, who remarked, "Women should be given the opportunity to become politicized, but they will have to accept the fact that we (socialists) know more than they do. If they decide not to become politicized, we can shove them into a women's auxiliary."

The perception by Socialist women that they have an "advanced level of consciousness" which other less aware women must necessarily struggle to attain, was strongly evident at the conference. They tended to regard the opinions and beliefs of other women as invalid, a tendency which they did not attempt to conceal or modify in the presence of non-socialist women. The problem of "levels of consciousness" is one that apparently runs through the movement.

2. Class Chauvinism. Because the women in WLM tend to be middle class, childless, and university educated, their world-view is necessarily limited by their experience. Although they tend to perceive themselves as "declassed", other women do not share this perception of them. In Women:



A Journal of Liberation (Vol. 2, No. 3), an article appeared, written by a welfare mother, accusing WLM of class chauvinism, of being preoccupied with improving the position of middle class women, without understanding the needs of poor women.

How dare you mention freedom and sit up there and talk that shit about free 24-hour child care centers and free abortion on demand when we're worrying whether our children will live? Talking about control over our own bodies when we don't have the right to even keep our bodies from being hungry. I want my children to be free to live. I don't want to turn them over to the Man's schools so they can be brainwashed, shamed, filled with self-hatred and disgust. I don't want to have a place to leave them so I can go out and work: I want to have the freedom of staying with them. I'm begging for the privilege of Motherhood. I already have free abortion on demand — they do the demanding. I just want a healthy baby.<sup>12</sup>

You murder me, women's liberationist, every bullshit demand you make; not because what you ask for is wrong, but because of what you leave out. Where is free childbirth in your platform, where is decent pre-natal care? Where is nourishing food for me, so my child isn't born premature and retarded? So he doesn't die in infancy? Where is a decent place to live, enough clothes, freedom from disease and filth?<sup>13</sup>

Why do you ignore us? Where are our needs in your demands? We can't fight for freedom as women when we're struggling just to stay alive. Your movement is a farce and a travesty to us, because you uphold the forces that make us beg for our existence; that make our lives a series of lines and interviews and endless waits in filthy, noisy, crowded rooms; that brand and label us as those who live at the whim of the State. Your silence consents to our misery. How dare you call yourselves our Sisters?<sup>14</sup>

At the Saskatoon conference, the one woman on welfare who was present stated: "You can't get people like me into your movement because you don't understand the shit we go through. You spend your time talking theory but don't understand what we need. Women's liberation seems to consider itself a leader, who must draw women to your movement. It's an elitist organization to direct revolutionary movements. You don't know the problems, so don't presume to attempt to draw in women from the working class until you do."







The welfare woman sent by WLM in Edmonton to the Vancouver conference commented, "They are a bunch of upper class liberals who don't know what they're talking about."

These statements were made about women who perceive themselves as radical revolutionaries, who have successfully "declassified" themselves. They tend not to realize that, from the perspective of poor women, their "declassification" has been in the direction of the youth counterculture rather than the working class or the poor.

3. Racism. This appeared as a major issue in the Portland planning conference and the Vancouver conference in the spring of 1971. Black women taking part in both conferences accused the whites of discriminating against Third World women, by patronisingly "inviting" them to a white women's conference.

(Racism) was demonstrated by the tokenistic attitude that "Third World sisters are invited to come if they want." The mailings which we received from Denver, San Francisco and Boston never mentioned Third World leadership and participation in both national and international aspects of the movement. Has it been forgotten that the Vietnamese women have repeatedly expressed their eagerness to meet the Third World women, and that this implies active participation in the planning of this meeting?

White women appear to be eager to meet with the Indochinese women and sympathize with their struggle while at the same time ignoring the struggle of Third World people in North America. This is evidenced by the fact that Women's Strike for Peace and many Women's Liberation groups have not related to the struggles of Third World sisters, and have not included us on an equal level in planning this conference.<sup>15</sup>

Following these charges, two days of the six day conference were set aside so that Third World women might meet with the Indochinese women in workshops which were closed to whites. At these workshops, "white guards" were stationed at the doors to prevent the entrance of white women, but some women got past. The researcher's informant, a "white guard", said, "We were too soft." The welfare woman from Edmonton wandered



into one of the workshops, to be promptly ejected by the non-white women. At a parallel international conference held in Toronto the following week, according to the same informant, Black Panther men acted as the "guards" during the Third World workshops, and no white woman managed to "infiltrate".

Arguments also arose over who is "the most oppressed", black women claiming that "white-skin privileges" make racists of all white women.

A Native woman whom WLM in Edmonton sent to the conference, reported that black women discriminated against the other non-white women, and monopolized the workshops held for Third World women. According to another informant, women from different racial groupings interacted minimally at the conference — black, white, and Chicana women all kept to themselves.

4. Lesbianism. Radicalesbians are growing increasingly vocal in their accusations that "straight" women in WLM discriminate against them, sometimes appearing more hostile to "straight" women than to men. A large number of them ignored the delegatory system set up at the Portland planning conference, to protest the treatment of lesbians by the rest of the movement. While they accuse straight women of oppressing them, they in turn appear to perceive that their particular oppression should be the central issue of priority for WLM as a whole.

5. Children. Most of the women in WLM are childless. They tend to display a lack of concern for the needs of women with children, and a lack of understanding of the circumstances of these women, who still make up the bulk of the adult female population.

Tactics. There is debate within the movement concerning the relative merits of specific organizational tactics, such as community organizing, direct actions or "zap actions", consciousness raising, and education



of the public through speaking engagements and written work. An analysis could be undertaken to determine which of these tactics are most effective, and under what conditions, while being aware that effectiveness will vary according to the goal which is being aimed for. One of the tactical issues debated at the Saskatoon conference was whether or not WLM should continue its attempts to recruit more women to its ranks, or to concentrate on developing an effective organization of the women already in the movement.

Another issue of debate is whether or not short term reforms should be encouraged, or ignored in an attempt to "politicize" more women and further the long term revolutionary goal, given the assumption that radicalization develops most readily in an atmosphere of disillusionment and frustration with the existing system. A statement rumored to come from one of the most influential revolutionary socialist women in the movement in Canada was, "I hope abortion reform doesn't go through. It would be bad for the revolution."

Co-optation. There is evidence in the literature of a continuing struggle by socialist women's liberationists to justify to the male Left the idea that women form a valid and necessary constituency to be organized as part of the socialist revolution. The male Left has tended to view women's issues as reformist rather than revolutionary. Some socialist women have accepted this criticism, and dissociated themselves from WLM. At the Saskatoon conference, two of the major socialist theorists of the Canadian movement announced that they were leaving WLM to join "the people's revolution." Several of their statements indicated a repudiation of the validity of WLM as a revolutionary movement.

"The women's movement is safe for us, whereas the real revolution is not."







"The idea is wrong that no-one can liberate women but women, and that women have to make the choice between looking after their own interests, and looking after the needs of others."

"Middle class women will pursue their own interests at the expense of working class women. A movement of middle class women is not revolutionary."

"The cause of oppression is not men, but the System. Women's problems are not central. Women are necessary to the revolution because they have demands, but the people's struggles are more important than women. Women are the strongest people in society, because they support others' needs rather than their own. Because we are strong we should work to liberate others weaker than ourselves."

"To deny the revolution is to be a collaborator with the enemy. We must be servants of the people, and the best servant of the people is a revolutionary."

"The civil rights movement taught us that reform does not work. Years of effort was wasted because, although reforms were gained, they were useless. The social democratic tactic assumes that capitalism and imperialism will vote themselves out of existence. This is wrong. Meet the needs of the people by force, taking what you need, not manipulating or petitioning for it. Develop "serve the people" programs as the Panthers and Young Lords are doing in the United States."

A question for the future of WLM may center on the extent to which it will retain its autonomy as a women's movement, and the extent to which it will be re-absorbed by the radical Left from which it sprang.

#### The Relationship between the Movement and the Larger Society

One of the determining factors of the direction in which WLM moves in the future, is the quality of the reaction of the larger society to WLM. This interplay of action and reaction between a movement and the larger system is one which was not discussed in the thesis, because the nature of the methodology made it difficult to study adequately this facet of the WLM phenomenon. WLM in Edmonton carried out four "direct actions"<sup>16</sup> during the period of the study, but from the researcher's position within the group, it was difficult to assess the influence which they had on outsiders, beyond the immediate impact at the scene of the demonstration.



There is a necessity to explore the effects which WLM has had on the general public, and the effect which public reactions will in turn have on the future direction of the movement.

Negative reactions to WLM. WLM has been met with some negative reactions from some segments of society. The Annals (September, 1971)<sup>17</sup> has suggested WLM as one of the issues contributing to the polarization of the larger society.

The Catholic church and Alliance for Life have instigated an anti-abortion campaign which is largely directed at WLM, which these organizations perceive as the instigators of the existing abortion reforms and the continued agitation for further reform. The last two demonstrations held on Parliament Hill by WLM, in February and November of 1971, were met by counter demonstrations by Alliance for Life. There is evidence that the anti-abortion campaign is gaining ground, for example, in New York, where the liberalization of abortion laws is being challenged in court.

As well as the privately voiced rejection of WLM by some women, the response of some has been to set up organizations which strenuously reassert the traditional response of acceptance of women's role in society. The researcher knows of at least three such organizations: MOM (Men Our Masters), Pussycat, and Fascinating Womanhood. Fascinating Womanhood offers programs across Canada and the United States. The Calgary Herald carried an advertisement for this profit making corporation in its November 3, 1971 edition, which promised to teach women how to have the perfect marriage, with no effort on the part of their husbands. Marriage is the sole responsibility of the female "partner". An article in Look<sup>18</sup> reported the following interchange at a Fascinating Womanhood class:



"If your husband ever mistreats you," Mrs. Leathen goes on, "you have learned how to be charming and fascinating in return....But why isn't there a course for men?"

"THEY DON'T NEED IT," comes the instant reply. Toward the end, there are testimonies. One lady tells of how she solved her difficulty in finding really feminine clothes by shopping in the children's department. Fascinating Womanhood teaches "childlikeness", also "sauciness," as positive virtues to be employed in the improvement of any marriage.<sup>19</sup>

According to Look, Fascinating Womanhood classes have drawn in an enrollment of 75,000 women in the United States (March, 1971). One "convert" described her feelings in this way:

"...I liked that it was against Women's Lib. Women's Lib is negative. I can't stand people who are negative — but I didn't want the opposite extreme either. At first, it was really hard to take — that you should always be the follower. And I used to think I should be equal in some ways — but now I don't. I still don't really understand why it's all up to the woman to make the marriage work, but I accept it. We read the Bible a lot. I'm not too religious, but God said it's women's role to be like we're taught, so I guess it is....In school, I wanted to be a marine biologist....But I got married. It used to hurt me that I wouldn't be able to use my talents, but not anymore. I still go to college. I may teach, but that's OK. It's a woman's role. Greg doesn't really like me going to school. I think he's a little bit afraid that I'll catch up with him. If it's going to bother him if I continue my education, then I won't, I mean, who am I? I mean it's very important to me, but not that important, know what I mean?"<sup>20</sup>

A possible area of study would be exploring the reasons for such strong re-assertion of the traditional female role, and its consequences for the women's movement.

Allegedly, some men's liberation groups have been formed, but the researcher was unable to ascertain whether these organizations did in fact exist. Many men do, however, display a hostile and defensive reaction to women's liberation. This reaction was evident among male students encountered by the researcher in the course of speaking engagements at university classrooms.







It is also evident in much of the current humor centering on WLM, a humor which stereotypes the women's liberationist as a man hating, masculine looking "butch". The researcher refers the reader to the comic section of the daily newspaper, especially B.C. and the Wizard of Id. A sample joke runs: "Pay a women's libber a compliment: tell her she even looks like a man." A poster now on sale, entitled "Women's Liberation", shows a rear view of two men and a miniskirted, booted woman, all standing at urinals in a male public washroom.

The existence of such humor indicates an attempt to trivialize the movement, an attempt to make it appear ridiculous. Research on the functions of humor<sup>21</sup> indicates that it often serves as an attempt to reduce the anxiety attached to situations which are really perceived as threatening, and expresses hostility towards a phenomenon (person, group) in a socially acceptable manner. Such humor, directed towards a women's liberationist in the presence of other women is also a control mechanism -- it tells the female bystanders that they can expect to be similarly insulted if they should attempt to emulate the women's liberationist.

A charge often directed at the movement, on the other hand, is that it is "humorless". No-one says of the black liberation movement that it "takes itself too seriously", or demands that it be "funny" or "humorous". Neither is it called "Black Lib." Women, however, are expected to have the good taste to treat their own freedom movement as a joke. A possible explanation of this expectation is that a dominant group prefers to believe that a subordinate group prefers its assigned position. An indication of this preference is a display of good cheer on the part of the subordinate actors. One is reminded of a statement by Simone de Beauvoir:



Like the carefree wretches gaily scratching at their vermin,  
like the merry Negroes laughing under the lash and those joyous  
Tunisian Arabs burying their starved children with a smile,  
woman enjoys that incomparable privilege: irresponsibility.<sup>22</sup>

Another area for exploration is the role which the mass media has played in conveying a certain image of WLM to the general public: how accurate has that image been, what have been the reasons for the portrayal as it has been given, and what are the effects on the public.

Positive influence. WLM has also been credited with some positive influences on attitudes in some segments of society, but it is impossible to gauge the extent of such alleged influence without studies carried out on the subject.

WLM has been credited, even by some physicians, with influencing the present liberalization of the abortion laws in Canada and the United States. The researcher has even heard some people outside the movement claim credit for WLM in influencing the government decision to set up the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, and the later appointment of the Liberal party's three woman "task force" which travelled throughout Canada in the summer of 1971, holding public meetings to discuss the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

It would seem that some women outside the movement have accepted the WLM assertion that women are oppressed, or at least that they face discrimination in society. They are beginning to recognize discrimination when they encounter it. The positive response to WLM has come most noticeably from middle class women. Women's magazines such as Chatelaine have, throughout the past year, emphasized women's rights in articles and editorials.<sup>23</sup> Magazine articles and the women's pages of the daily newspapers regularly carry stories centering on the issues of women's rights. Most of these articles seem to be written from the perspective



of professional women, who, although they are now prepared to say that women face discrimination, and prepared to advocate changes, are also usually hasty to point out, "I'm not a women's lib. advocate, but I do think..."

Two questions emerge from this sudden interest in women's rights. First, to what extent might WLM be influencing the emergence of other women's rights organizations which are more avowedly "reformist" in intent than WLM, that is, composed of older (30 and above) middle class, professional and semi-professional women who still believe in using the existing institutions to bring about change? If such organizations emerge, to what extent will the charges of the revolutionary socialists that middle class women only fight to preserve their own interests, be true?

Second, to what extent will the official government interest in women's rights continue in a serious attempt to introduce massive reform action, and to what extent will it end in tokenism? What women will be affected in each case?

Jessie Bernard suggests that WLM is performing a necessary and positive function in society at this time.<sup>24</sup> She argues that women's traditional role is being rapidly rendered obsolete, through "technological unemployment", and that a new role relationship between men and women must be evolved to replace these obsolete expectations. The function of WLM is to suggest viable alternatives and to prepare the public for the changes in role relationships which must of necessity take place, since they can no longer be based on consideration of reproduction, child socialization, or household management. Their function is basically innovative.





The radical women, like children who view things freshly and are not fooled by preconceptions, proclaim openly that the emperor has no clothes. They look at marriage and what it does to women rather than at the stereotype and at what women say it does. What radical women say about marriage alienates both men and many married women. Men do not relish the implications of what the radical women rub their nose in, and the married women are frightened by a threat to the foundation of their lives.<sup>25</sup>

The radical women are anticipating a future in which loving and affectionate companionship between the sexes will be possible, based on mutual recognition of one another as individuated human beings rather than as stereotypical male and female sex beings. The radical women are under no illusions that bringing about these new relationships is going to be easy. Men will resist and punish them. Unliberated women, brainwashed not only to accept their slavery but also to love it, will also resist.<sup>26</sup>

They are preparing us for a future in which we are going to have to recognize a different kind of woman and a different kind of role for women than we did in the past.<sup>27</sup>

A possible area for further study could be the relative accuracy in predicting the future for women's roles, comparing the approach of functionalists such as Bernard, with the conflict approach that WLM has endorsed. To what extent, and under what conditions, might Bernard's predictions be accurate?

An article by Romer and Secor in The Annals (September, 1971) defines the present social system as "masculine", and envisions the future from a feminist perspective.

The problem, then, that ultimately confronts us...is whether or not we can accommodate the existing masculine ideology, institutions, and behavior patterns to the emerging feminine definition of culture that is being articulated and practiced by both the counter-culture and the women's liberation movement. It becomes increasingly clear that both groups are creating life styles that celebrate the personal characteristics and modes of experience that have in our culture traditionally been designated as feminine. Can we evolve a culture that is human -- fully human -- and not based on the assumption that persons come in polarized pairs and are thus by definition imperfect, fragments of some imagined unity, and of necessity alienated from that unity?<sup>28</sup>



When men and women shall have been socialized equally, they will be prepared for the first time in history to participate in the democratic process. When men and women have evolved an etiquette adequate to the needs of persons rather than of non-individualized sexual stereotypes, there will open up the remaining vista — the establishment of a true community, one in which human potential is realized and each person does give according to his ability and receive according to his needs. Then human liberation is possible. This is the vista that is already opening to women who understand that if feminism is to be the ultimate revolution, it must establish an androgynous community in which roles will not be assigned according to gender.<sup>29</sup>

Although the assertion might be questioned that the counter-culture and WLM as a whole are developing a culture which could be termed "feminine", the above quoted article, and that of Bernard's, do raise an interesting question. That question is: How might humans be defined without the differentiation into "masculine" and "feminine" statuses and roles that presently form such a primary part of the way in which we perceive ourselves and each other? What would be the consequences — positive and/or negative — of developing alternative social definitions of persons, which did not involve the primary dichotomy of male/female? To what extent might the development of an "androgynous" system of relationships be possible?



Footnotes: Chapter VI

1. Lewis A. Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (New York: The Free Press, 1956), see discussion of Coser's analysis of the probabilities of conflict within a movement, Chapter I, pp. 17-18.
2. Taken from the Lethbridge Herald, December 20, 1971.
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13. Ibid., p. 51.
14. Ibid., p. 51.
15. "Statement from a number of Third World women who are working on the Indochinese women's conference", Third World Women's Caucus, Los Angeles, California. Endorsed by Portland meeting February 7, 1971.
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25. Ibid., p. 42.
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28. Romer & Secor, op.cit., p. 138.
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